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AMERICAN AND BRITISH LITERATURE
SINCE 1890

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AMERICAN AND BRITISH LITERATURE
SINCE 1890

BY

CARL VAN DOREN

AND

MARK VAN DOREN

Student's Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Intended primarily for the use of schools, this manual of the literature produced in America, England, and Ireland during the past thirty-five years will also, it is hoped, prove useful to those general readers who are neither proficient in the subject nor unconcerned with it. Both sorts of audiences will find that the book has been adapted to their needs according to definite principles. Those principles do not include any effort to simplify the account unduly, to disguise the ideas which have been put forth by the more daring writers of the time, or to steer a safe middle course when there are points at issue. On the contrary, stress has been laid upon the modern elements, whether ideas or forms, in recent literature. But the book does not claim, as it does not attempt, to go into many vexed controversies or to concern itself with many minor figures. Such items of literary history, while fascinating to the expert, are confusing to the beginner. He has, from desultory reading, from hearsay, from lectures, from reviews, learned that there are numerous contemporary writers of note about whom he would like to have a more systematic knowledge. What he requires is not a series of specialized monographs, but a plain and untechnical exposition which will furnish a ground-plan upon which to build in case he cares to go further. That plain and untechnical exposition of its theme this volume is the first to offer to the public. So far as possible, it has discarded all non-essentials, reducing the authors studied to the minimum, commenting upon only the more important of their works, carrying no elaborate burden of

dates and titles, confining itself to matters of some permanent significance.

If it devotes less space than might have been expected to certain eminent survivors of an earlier age, such as Howells, Henry James, Mark Twain, Hardy, Meredith, Swinburne, who did good work during the years covered by this record, that is in large part because they have already been dealt with in various works easily accessible to laymen. In part, however, it is because this book does not share the prevailing notion that the history of literature in English ended with the death of the great writers of the age just closed. As a matter of fact, the literature of Ireland since 1890 is unquestionably the most distinguished which the country has yet produced in the English language, the literature of America during that period is as distinguished as any it has ever produced in any period of equal length, and the post-Victorian literature of England suffers not too much by comparison with that of earlier ages of which the reputation is now higher. And even if this recent literature were of less moment than it is, it would lawfully make demands upon the student or the general reader. For literature is a continuous stream accompanying the life of the nation which writes it. At any given moment, the spectator may feel that the stream of literature has widened out over flats and shoals, lacking the concentration and direction which he now sees the literature of the past to have had. But spectators in the past thought the same thing about the literature which they then surveyed, and spectators in the future will no doubt envy the present age its strong current and sharp banks. In the circumstances, a book may be permitted to try to chart that current and indicate those banks. That is what this book tries to do.

Still, it does not aim too entirely to anticipate the judgment of the future. It has been written in the conviction

that some writers may mean much to their own age whether or not they are likely to mean much to another. One of the notable functions of literature is to hold up a mirror in which manners and opinions may be studied by their contemporaries. Books written long ago or in remote lands have always a touch of strangeness which renders it difficult for the average reader to make the necessary comparisons between the reality which he knows and the reflection which he sees. Americans have been at a particular disadvantage in this respect. Inheriting on their continent the literature of a distant island, they have viewed it habitually through the slight haze which distance gives. There is all the more reason, then, why they should offset this by paying attention to their own literature. Moreover, American literature, as it grows in distinctiveness, grows increasingly more and more differentiated from the literature of the parent stock. It must therefore be estimated according to its own laws, not according to those of England. The account here offered considers the recent and contemporary literature of the United States as an independent venture on the part of an independent nation, not as a single chapter in the larger history of that imaginative activity of which London has been the center. At the same time, due attention has been paid in this account to the literature of the British Isles, which not only parallels that of America, but is at so many points interwoven with it.

That the literature of the three branches of the English-speaking race has been significant during the past three or four decades, this volume testifies; but that the volume is aimed to meet the need of American students first of all will appear from both its arrangement and its scale of treatment. The section dealing with native literature stands, obviously, at the head of the book, because for native students it is the logical beginning. Furthermore,

the British authors chosen for discussion are chiefly those who have won a hearing in America or who deserve it by reason of merits which are readily perceptible outside of Britain. Trivial authors, it is true, who may have had a vogue on this side of the Atlantic are in no case preferred to weighty ones whose American reputation lags; nevertheless, certain international elements have been regularly taken into account. It will be noted, too, that writers like Hardy, Shaw, Kipling, Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells, are treated in greater detail than has been devoted to any of the Americans.' The reasons for this disparity are two: first, that those men have most of them had longer careers than their American rivals and have written more books; and, second, that they require in any case a larger amount of explanation to make them thoroughly comprehensible than Americans of even an equal rank require. The second reason applies to the Irish writers, who are on the whole even less known, though well worth knowing, than either the English or the Americans. In the proportion given to any particular American writer, account has been taken of both his influence and his intrinsic worth, and where there was occasion for doubt, the preference has been given to writers who have by careers of some length and by outputs of some bulk afforded a basis for critical opinion which can rarely be afforded when the evidence is slighter.

Though every effort has been made to bring the book down to date, it has been thought inadvisable to confuse the laymen or the young student by mentioning numberless interesting figures who are just now the topics of literary gossip. Time and their own subsequent work must determine whether they belong in such a study as this. The thing to be kept in mind by any reader who looks herein for guidance to the literature of the period is that that literature is still vigorous, is still continuing a

march of which no record can be quite adequate, because even while criticism pauses to take stock, the materials increase and shift. One purpose of the book is to insist upon the continuity of the stream which it tries to describe, not to arrest.

January, 1925.

C. V. D.
M. V. D.

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PART ONE

AMERICAN LITERATURE

American and British Literature Since 1890

AMERICAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

POETRY

BY the year 1890 the most famous American poets had joined, in varying degrees, the ranks of the classics. To say nothing of Poe, who died young, Bryant, Lanier, Longfellow, and Emerson were already dead; and Lowell, Whitman, Whittier, and Holmes were at the end of their careers. There were, indeed, numerous writers of verse who had some reputation, but the public was right in feeling that these were minor poets, earnest or dainty survivors from more energetic days. No one of them had been shaped by the great national struggles of the past century and no one of them gave voice to the newer national ideals which were demanding expression. For the most part, they were content to sing pretty songs about remote emotions or to argue in meter about established ideas. They might, of course, have been significant without being strikingly national if they had been strikingly personal; but in this respect also they fell below the level of great poetry. Too many of them seemed to feel that it was their duty to limit their utterances to subjects which were polite or proper and to language

which was smooth and decorous. No doubt this showed that they were good citizens and good men, as indeed they were. It showed no less truly, however, that they either lacked powerful poetical impulses or else misjudged the nature of poetry, which to be memorable must be direct, courageous, and ardent, and not merely graceful or acceptable to the majority. It has been claimed that the scarcity of poets in the nineties was due about equally to the exaggerated prestige of the older school and to the exaggerated gentility of the newer school. Whatever the explanation, it is the fact that the last decade of the century had, among many poets, few that are now read or that deserve to be.

Riley 1853–1916

The most popular of these few was James Whitcomb Riley, who without being very distinctive was very representative. Rarely original and never elevated, he expressed ordinary emotions in ordinary language, with neat phrases and simple melodies. He was an accomplished craftsman in verse who knew how to produce many charming effects as in so typical a stanza as this from "The Old Swimmin' Hole":

> Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
> When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-ways,
> How pleasant was the jurney down the old dusty lane,
> Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plane
> You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
> They was lots o' fun on hands at the old swimmin'-hole.
> But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
> Like the rain that use to dapple up the old swimmin'-hole.

Having lived most of his life in villages or small towns, Riley was familiar with the village or small-town way of thinking and feeling and was hardly less familiar with farms and farmers. His poems are full of accurate detail regarding typical American lives as they were led in his day in his part of the country and indeed in most parts

of the country. Numerous readers of that day who would not have enjoyed poems dealing with persons or events in some foreign land, did enjoy poems dealing with matters which lay within their own experience. Knowing such matters well, and sympathizing with them genuinely, Riley thus came close to his wide if not critical public. He came even closer by his natural instinct always to idealize the past and to look tenderly upon children. Most of the men and women for whom he wrote, absorbed in hard work or dull routine, liked nothing better than to remember the pleasures of their youth before care had crept upon them and stolen away their glad irresponsibility. Most of them, too, regarded their children, or children at large, as the most touching and attractive items in a commonplace world, because it was possible, through them, for adults to read again the bright pages in the tedious volume of their own lives. In Riley's verses these attitudes were agreeably reflected. He sang of the old swimming-hole, the old trundle-bed, the old haymow, the old glee-club, of old-fashioned roses, of old sweethearts, of old Aunt Mary, bringing up recollections which moved his hearers to happy laughter or happy tears as perhaps no other topic could have done. He sang no less movingly of the joys and whims and pathos of childhood, touching perhaps too often upon the grief of parents for dead children.

No doubt his concentration upon the past and upon the young was a kind of mannerism, but it did not tire people who shared his sentiments. To offset this, he had a considerable aptitude for shrewd characterization and for canny folk-wisdom. Without always justifying his optimism, he managed always to look for the bright side of human fortunes, and this pleased an audience who believed that pessimism was an unworthy trait. In view of all these things, it is no wonder that Riley, despite

certain weaknesses of character, was admired and loved, is so honored in his native State of Indiana that a day of the year has been officially set aside to keep his fame alive, and has been accepted in all the States as a laureate of rural life.

Santayana 1863–

As different from Riley as possible was another poet who published notable verse in the nineties. George Santayana was born in Spain, saw during his youth, though he passed it in the United States, little that was typical of ordinary American life, and was a professor of philosophy at Harvard until he decided just before the recent war to live thenceforth in Europe. Though a master of English prose, he admits that the roots of the language "do not reach quite to my center. I never drank in in childhood the homely cadences and ditties which in pure spontaneous poetry set the essential key." He had, being city-bred, no intimate feeling for nature such as is the basis of most poetry in England or America, and yet he did not feel called to tell stories in verse or to create characters. He was thus limited to reflective poetry of an austere sort never likely to attract many readers. Poetry, however, to be excellent does not have to be popular, and Santayana's "Sonnets" (1894) would be distinguished in the literature of any nation. They show his later philosophy [1] in the making. Without precisely telling a story, they give a subtle record of the emotions which went through him while he was achieving maturity. That he seems to have achieved by gradually disentangling his mind from the chains which bound it. Brought up in an orthodox theology, he found that it ceased to convince him, though custom, a desire to be loyal, and distrust of the validity of his doubts long held him from any open break. Eventually he could say, in one of his most famous sonnets:

[1] For his prose, see pages 118–121.

Farewell, my burden! No more will I bear
The foolish load of my fond faith's despair,
But trip the idle race with careless feet.
The crown of olive let another wear;
It is my crown to mock the runner's heat
With gentle wonder and with laughter sweet.

So also he disentangled himself from another bond, that of his love for a woman who may be real or only symbolical but whom in either case he did not win. After bitter suffering he could finally address her:

He who hath made thee perfect, makes me blest.
O fiery minister, on mighty wings
Bear me, great love, to mine eternal rest.
Heaven it is to be at peace with things;
Come chaos now, and in a whirlwind's rings
Engulf the planets. I have seen the best.

Thus Santayana freed himself from a religion and a love in which he could not be happy, by ceasing to repine over what he could not have, keeping the purest elements of his experience in his memory, and living as civilized a life as he could in his own mind with the help of knowledge and beauty. His sonnets are a fit expression of his struggle and victory. They are lucid, sincere, eloquent, each of them almost flawlessly written and constructed, and yet so linked all of them together as to present an affecting drama of the spirit.

Emily Dickinson 1830–1886

Although Emily Dickinson had died before 1890 she was virtually unknown till that year, which saw the publication of her first volume and with it the beginning of an influence which has increased rather than diminished ever since. Long a recluse in her father's house in Massachusetts, she had been caught up by none of the poetical fashions of her time but had instead practised her art with the integrity and intensity of a hermit who had no other occupation. She

was careless as to the form of her poems, willing for them to be unsymmetrical, inaccurately rhymed, lawless in their rhythms, if only they could be vivid and arresting. In particular she dispensed with the customary poetic padding. She stripped her verse to the bone, as if nothing but the essential idea or the essential image were important. Of the earlier American poets she perhaps most resembles Emerson, but she really resembles no one besides herself. She is a Yankee to the extent that she is naturally laconic; she is a woman to the extent that she draws many of her illustrations from household matters; she is above all a poet speaking with a poet's uncompromising directness of vision. Thus, for instance, she expresses a lover's impatience and prodigality:

If you were coming in the fall,
I 'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I 'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I 'd count them on my hand,
Substracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Dieman's land.

If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

Love is not her only topic. She speaks in her piercing way about the thrill of life, the mystery of death, the most varied objects of nature. Such a common sight as that of a bee at his daily work suggests to her that the pride of caste is a human invention without any real counterpart among the less artificial animals:

> The pedigree of honey
> Does not concern the bee;
> A clover, any time, to him
> Is aristocracy.

When she wants to say, with Keats, that "beauty is truth, truth beauty," she invents a story to make her point:

> I died for beauty, but was scarce
> Adjusted in the tomb,
> When one who died for truth was lain
> In an adjoining room.
>
> He questioned softly why I failed?
> "For beauty," I replied.
> "And I for truth,—the two are one;
> We brethren are," he said.
>
> And so, as kinsmen met a night,
> We talked between the rooms,
> Until the moss had reached our lips,
> And covered up our names.

She can be playful, she can compress her meaning into little parables, she can wring the heart with dramatic situations set forth in a dozen lines. But it is not, of course, her variety which has kept her from suffering the loss of reputation which many of her contemporaries have suffered, and which makes her now seem one of the American classics. She survives because she is what may be termed an irreducible poet, without false colors likely to fade or false contours likely to wither. What

survives in her is essential poetry or wit, and it happens that there was never in her much beside these things in a concentrated form.

Hovey 1864–1900

The very end of the century brought forth two poets, Mid-Westerners educated in New England, who, though they both died young and left their work incomplete, struck certain poetical notes which are still interesting for other qualities besides their promise of better things to come. Richard Hovey, disgusted with the esthetic poses and indoor atmosphere of current European poets, took in his verses to the open road, singing, as in "Songs from Vagabondia," the joys of vagabond adventure with a kind of Gipsy gusto.

> Down the world with Marna!
> That's the life for me!
> Wandering with the wandering wind,
> Vagabond and unconfined!
> Roving with the roving rain
> Its unboundaried domain!
> Kith and kin of wander-kind,
> Children of the sea.

He celebrated also the lusty, hearty comradeship of young men, particularly in the poems which he wrote for his college and most popularly in the song, loved in all colleges, which ends:

> For we know the world is glorious
> And the goal a golden thing,
> And that God is not censorious
> When his children have their fling;
> And life slips its tether
> When the boys get together,
> With a stein on the table in the fellowship of spring.

Hovey also undertook an ambitious, uncompleted cycle of poetic dramas on the old theme of Arthur and Guin-

evere and Lancelot, trying to present it, without Tennyson's sentimentalism, as a universal story of tragic love. Finally, he wrote during the Spanish War a number of strenuous poems glorifying the conflict with an enthusiasm which was too seldom either humane or intelligent. In his longer works he never entirely freed himself from his tendency to imitate such predecessors as Swinburne, and even in his praise of the free life there are signs that his braggadocio was partly borrowed from such contemporaries as Kipling. Thus Hovey must be regarded as something less than a true creative poet. He is remembered, however, and will long be preserved in the anthologies, because he so admirably represents the new spirit in American literature, which was breaking with its recent tradition of complacency and triviality and was daring to speak out in valiant tones about whatever might interest it.

Moody 1869–1910

William Vaughn Moody, though more of a scholar than Hovey, was less of a singer. He edited Milton and loved Greek tragedy; in his most ambitious undertaking, like Hovey's uncompleted, he tried to show how mankind, estranged from God by its effort to become independent, must in the end be reconciled—through woman, who had first endangered the divine plan of union. But partly because Moody never wrote more than fragments of the third poetic drama which was to make his whole scheme clear, and partly because his central idea was by its very nature large and cloudy, he remains better known for his shorter poems, a few of which are of genuine interest and excellence. "A Menagerie," one of these brief poems, shows a man becoming aware that the animals around him represent the various stages of the experiment by which nature has worked to arrive at the human animal;

he has a moment of humility, wittily expressed, as he thinks of the poor figure he really cuts.

> I, I, last product of the toiling ages,
> Goal of heroic feet that never lagged,—
> A little man in trousers, slightly jagged.

Again, in "Gloucester Moors," the poet comes suddenly to think of the earth as a slave-ship plunging through the sea, toward a port which no one knows, with a crew which does not trouble itself about the wretches stifling and rotting in the hold. Must the earth thus sail on forever, with so little justice among its inhabitants?

Nor was Moody content to question life in general. He spoke out against the partition of China by the European powers in his fable called "The Quarry," wherein China is represented as an ancient elephant followed by brutes of prey till the eagle, symbol of the United States, drives them temporarily off. And in the most powerful of all his poems, rising above that jingoism which is a blot upon Hovey's fame, Moody took issue with his own country in "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," written when the country was deciding whether to annex the Philippines. To the most scrupulous Americans of the time it seemed unpardonable that, after a war which had no avowed aim but to free Cuba from a foreign yoke, the victor should then impose another foreign yoke upon distant islands which had had nothing to do with the original controversy.

> Was it for this our fathers kept the law?
> This crown shall crown their struggle and their ruth?
> Are we the eagle nation Milton saw
> Mewing its mighty youth,
> Soon to possess the mountain winds of truth,
> And be a swift familiar of the sun
> Where ay before God's face his trumpets run?
> Or have we but the talons and the maw,

And for the abject likeness of our heart
Shall some less lordly bird be set apart?—
Some gross-billed wader where the swamps are fat?
Some gorger in the sun? Some prowler with the bat?

Though the Philippines were eventually annexed, and Moody's poem thus speaks for a defeated minority, it still rises from among the memories of the time as the noblest poetical utterance, still stands as one of the loftiest political poems in American history; and it will doubtless be cherished by lovers of poetry and justice long after most of Moody's work has paid its natural penalty for being, when not at its best, a little imitative, a little heavy with erudition, a little obscure.[1]

1912

If the last decade of the nineteenth century was relatively unproductive of striking poetry, so was the first decade of the twentieth. Santayana had left poetry for philosophy, Moody turned to prose plays, and Hovey was dead. Though a robust and diversified group of new poets was growing up in that decade, they had not yet reached maturity, or they still lacked any considerable recognition. Nevertheless, many books of verse were published, and it began gradually to be felt that the cause of poetry was not a hopeless one. That cause was furthered in 1912 by the founding at Chicago of the monthly "Poetry: A Magazine of Verse," and the next year by the appearance in Boston of the first annual volume of the "Anthology of Magazine Verse," both of which have continued to render service of a kind much needed. They have given a hearing to poets who might otherwise have been neglected, they have stimulated critical discussion of poetry, they have helped to fix public attention upon the art. Of course, however, they could not have done this had it not been for the sudden rise of new poets with new power. Why, after a dreary

[1] For Moody's plays, see pages 93–94.

interregnum, this renewed poetical activity should have begun, is a matter which cannot be entirely explained; but the cause must be connected with the fact that the new poets were more impassioned, more outspoken, and more realistic than had been the custom with most American poets for a generation. Poetry, recently too often a kind of elegant accomplishment, now came to look upon itself as a serious concern. It challenged accepted opinions; it tried new forms and methods; it told stories and created characters; it drew near to the facts of native life, trying to lift them to significance and not merely, as had too long been its tendency, trying to escape from them to the world of fancy.

Robinson 1869–

One of the first things which this renaissance achieved was the discovery by a rapidly widening circle of readers that they had been overlooking an American poet of high rank already among them. Edwin Arlington Robinson, born in Maine and trained at Harvard, had since the nineties struggled in New York against the obstacles of poverty and obscurity. Nothing, however, had diverted him from his course. Little influenced by the current fashions in poetry, he had set out to be a poet in his own way. When other poets were tamely following Tennyson, copying his sweetness and softness, Robinson had been studying Thomas Hardy for his strong hold on common life, and George Crabbe, the bluntest of the English poets. But this study of sound models was only the beginning of Robinson's task. He had gone on to develop in himself an individual style, to find subjects which suited his gifts, to choose forms into which he could pour his material with the slightest loss of effect. Most of all, he had been interested in the interpretation of human character, particularly as it could be studied at crucial moments, and he had written a series of dramatic sonnets,

biographies in miniature, which are unmatched in the language. By the beginning of the second decade of the century he had reached a maturity not to be mistaken.

The postponement of his fame may be in part ascribed to his habit, during the strenuous, optimistic era in which he laid down his plans, of writing much of the time about the vanity, not to say the futility, of human life. Leaving to other poets the delight of studying successful men and women, Robinson had bent his shrewd, kind, ironical eyes upon the misfits in society. He tells hauntingly of Richard Cory, who was handsome and rich and admired, but who yet, because of some secret discontent, killed himself in the midst of his prosperity. He tells humorously of Miniver Cheevy, who wept that he was ever born because he could not endure the present and longed for the romantic past:

> Miniver loved the Medici,
> Albeit he had never seen one;
> He would have sinned incessantly
> Could he have been one.
>
> Miniver cursed the commonplace
> And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
> He missed the mediæval grace
> Of iron clothing.

There was nothing, apparently, for Miniver Cheevy to do but to keep on thinking and drinking. Robinson tells about the graceless vagabond Captain Craig, discoursing forever like a trivial Socrates in Tilbury Town, the Maine village which Robinson has made memorable by his frequent references to it as the home of many of his characters. He had indeed described so many pathetic or amusing failures that he has been called the poet of futility.

Even when he deserts his failures to study the suc-

cessful, he has still a sense of the vanity of human efforts. No passage in all his poetry is more characteristic than the speech which he puts into the mouth of Shakspere comparing men to flies, in the dramatic monologue called "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford":

> Your fly will serve as well as anybody.
> And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
> And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
> And then your spider gets him in his net,
> And eats him up and hangs him up to dry.
> That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
> And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,
> And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
> It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
> It's all a world where bugs and emperors
> Go singularly back to the same dust,
> Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
> That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
> Old stave to-morrow.

In something of this spirit Robinson examines an ancient legend in his "Merlin" and "Lancelot." Though these two long poems journey to Camelot for their scene and to Arthur's court for their subject, they find them neither heroic nor sentimental, as most poets have done, but remarkably like cities and courts everywhere. Camelot falls because of its frailties rather than because of its vices. Merlin, bewitched by his love for Vivien, leaves the court and thus deprives it of a strong, wise man who might have sustained it. Lancelot turns away from love, but he turns to follow the grail, thinking thereby to show himself a strong, wise man, and the grail proves to be a will-o'-the-wisp; ruin overtakes Camelot as much from one man's acts as from the others. Mankind, these poems seem to hint, is made up of doomed creatures all moving to their end according to some scheme which they cannot understand, with no absolute consolation ex-

cept that possibly they may be able to perceive their fate and so not be duped by it into cherishing false hopes.

Though such a view of life is very old and has been held by some of the wisest of men, it was assuredly not common in the United States during the flushed years which greeted the new century. Robinson, holding it, seems something of an alien in his times. Yet he is thoroughly typical of the latest New England generation, which, no longer so energetic as the earlier generations, has produced numerous minds given to brooding profoundly over the general state of man, as the people of advanced civilizations everywhere tend to do. He is, in a sense, another Hawthorne, more learned and more ironical. His characters have so much of the Yankee in them that they cannot cry out with the loud voices of most tragic heroes. They are most eloquent in their silences. They do not invite the spectators of their fates to feel with them merely, but to understand them. Robinson does not help his readers. He demands that the dramas which he represents shall be listened to attentively, without explanation on his part. This of course limits his audience. It is further limited by his poetical methods. He does not sing with bright, swift words, any more than he rants with high, purple words. What lifts his language is thought. Being himself very subtle, and perceiving in various situations all sorts of subtle consequences, he often deals with them when his readers are expecting him to tell a plain story. Many of his poems, especially such longer, later ones as "Roman Bartholow" and "The Man Who Died Twice" (1924), are unquestionably difficult to follow, by reason of his subtlety. They are, nevertheless, as a whole full of wisdom and beauty and irony beyond the reach of almost any living poet.

What essentially sets Robinson apart from his rivals

is the number of characters he has created. Dozens of persons emerge from his pages with an unmistakable reality, though he has not put them into orthodox tragedies or comedies but has in many cases allowed each of them no more than a few spare lines of verse. It might be more accurate to say that he is less a dramatist than an etcher, hitting off human likenesses or situations with terse, crisp strokes. Nor is he like Crabbe, primarily blunt and honest. He has delicate insight into all sorts of human matters. His style, though chaste, is frequently marked by lovely melodies, as in his lines, in "The Man Against the Sky" (1916), on the poor relation who has outstayed her welcome and yet has nowhere to go:

> And like a giant harp that hums
> On always, and is always blending
> The coming of what never comes
> With what has past and had an ending,
> The City trembles, throbs, and pounds
> Outside, and through a thousand sounds
> The small intolerable drums
> Of Time are like slow drops descending.

Not melody, however, but precision is Robinson's chief quality as a writer. His words are selected with exactness, his various meters handled with dexterity. He does not write loosely, as he does not think loosely, but ponders every observation he makes upon life, every trait of a character, every image, till he comprehends it completely, and then seeks for the words which shall, so far as he can judge, most truthfully communicate his meaning. Through all the wide range of his subjects and characters he has preserved in himself a combination of virtues which is very rare in a poet: he is always at once profound and precise.

Free verse

So rapid was the burst of poetry which followed 1912 that within five years the chief new

poets had already made names for themselves and in some cases had done what now seems to have been their best work. To readers of old-fashioned taste it then looked as if there had been a violent revolution. The established forms of verse were suddenly put on the defensive, and free verse came into such a vogue that it had both enemies and defenders who did not always understand what they were talking about. As a matter of fact, the freedom consisted largely in the giving up of rhyme, which was no great innovation, and in the substitution of rhythm for meter as the technical element which distinguished the new poetry from prose. That is to say, instead of writing poetry in regular lines of verse with the same succession of accented and unaccented syllables in each, certain of the new poets undertook to make less regular rhythms their standard of measure and even to vary the rhythms used in the same poem. This mystified those members of the public who, having long been accustomed to rhyme and meter in poetry, had come to think of them as essential and who now questioned whether the new poetry was poetry at all. They were further mystified by a great change of method which the new poets permitted themselves, going to common life, employing common language, being realistic and satiric, mixing tragedy and comedy, and in many ways disturbing the smooth channel in which American poetry had flowed for a generation. The poets, however, persisted and quickly found supporters among a numerous class which had come to be bored by the traditional styles. There were a good many meaningless experiments with nothing but novelty to commend them, and a good many foolish arguments to prove that the new poetry could not please even when it was pleasing. But within a reasonable time the victory was won to the extent that there had come to be a reading public which realized that both old and new

forms had merit and that they could exist side by side.

Frost 1875–

The poets who won recognition were not in all cases connected with the revolutionary party. Like Robinson, Robert Frost has been satisfied to confine himself almost altogether to rhyme or to blank verse of a more or less accepted kind. Moreover, he has kept close to the soil of New England in gathering his material. But he has struck new notes and has made a definite contribution to native poetry. In particular, he has tried to give his poems as nearly as possible the quality of human speech, which to his ear is apparently more delightful than human singing. Behind all he has to say may be heard the sound of a Yankee voice, even when he is deeply moved, as in these lines of "Birches," one of his most noted poems:

> So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
> And so I dream of going back to be.
> It 's when I 'm weary of considerations,
> And life is too much like a pathless wood
> Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
> Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
> From a twig's having lashed across it open.
> I 'd like to get away from earth awhile
> And then come back to it and begin over.
> May no fate willfully misunderstand me
> And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
> Not to return. Earth 's the right place for love:
> I don't know where it 's likely to go better.
> I 'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
> And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
> *Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
> But dipped its top and set me down again.
> That would be good both going and coming back.
> One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

It is intensely characteristic of Frost that he should hint at all he thinks about earth and heaven in the same plain language with which he has told about the boyish

amusement of climbing birches and then bending them down to the ground. Whatever he expresses is expressed in this subdued tone, as if he were a man of such few words that any of them must mean a great deal. Frost owes, indeed, his brevity and simplicity to the habits of speech which prevail among the rural Yankees, in those inland towns and upland parishes which he represents as Robinson represents the more cultivated population of the New England cities. The New England back country, of course, has been the scene of countless stories and the subject of countless poems; but Frost, particularly in "North of Boston" (1914) and "Mountain Interval" (1916), has touched such themes in a fresh way. He does not deal with them sentimentally, as has too often been the custom, nor, as the custom has almost always been, in the manner of a visitor to these communities who regards them as museums of odd characters and strange dialects. He sees in them the stages on which, as on any human stage however large or small, there are transacted the universal tragedies and comedies of birth, love, work, hope, despair, death. Content to be a Yankee poet, he has been content to write of Yankee matters in a Yankee idiom, without explaining or apologizing. Being a genuine poet, he has written poems which are shrewd or wise or beautiful in themselves and which may be of interest to readers who know nothing of New England.

Having lived much of his life as a farmer in New Hampshire or Vermont, Frost has studied his chosen world with sharp eyes. He seems never to have merely glanced at natural objects, but always to have fully taken them in. He refers to country tasks with the knowledge of a man who has performed them with his own hands, to animals with the knowledge of a man who has trained and cared for them, to the characters of his stories with the knowledge of a man who

has lived neighbor to such persons. Sight and insight, Frost says, are the whole business of the poet. He should first see things clearly, and then perceive their significance. Frost's practice is well illustrated in the poem called "The Tuft of Flowers," in which he tells how, once turning the hay in a meadow which another man had mowed before him, he began to think with pain that men are always alone, "whether they work together or apart." But in a little while he came upon a tuft of flowers in the hay which the mower had apparently spared out of respect for their beauty, and then the poet could

> feel a spirit kindred to my own;
> So that henceforth I worked no more alone.
>
> But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
> And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;
>
> And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
> With one whose thought I had not thought to reach.
>
> "Men work together," I told him from the heart,
> "Whether they work together or apart."

This is as characteristic of Frost's attitude as is his quiet speech. His poetry is the poetry of neighborliness. He neither praises nor condemns the race of man at large, but tries to become acquainted with those men and women whom he meets in his daily life and forms about them any opinions he may have about human life.

For all he works within such strict limits, he has unusual range. Now he can write a charming lyric struck off in some mood of joy. Now he can set forth an idea at which he arrived after long reflection. Now he can sketch a character with shrewd perception. Now he can tell a humorous story with the light touch of comedy. Now he can build up an episode of madness or witchcraft or

guilt with the strong, sure grasp of tragedy. At the same time, he must be met on his own ground. He does not call out in the ringing voice of those poets who draw many hearers to them by the vehemence of their utterance. Though without the occasional obscurity of Robinson, Frost speaks so softly that it is possible for intelligent readers to miss his meanings. He does not insist upon his meanings, he does not point out his morals, but leaves them both to be discovered by anybody who will take the trouble to hunt for them. To value him fully a reader has to begin with a true affection for the facts of experience themselves and then has to move about among Frost's poems as if they were honest transcripts of experience, with very little emphasis upon any conclusions to be drawn from them. Such a reader, willing to dispense with rhetoric or explanations, will find that these poems grow upon him, signifying, like experience itself, more and more with each examination. He will feel an increasing delight in the accuracy with which Frost has described familiar objects and suggested familiar emotions, lifting them to the plane of beauty without adding unwarranted colors to them and lifting them to the plane of universal significance without seeming to take them out of their ordinary settings.

Lindsay 1879–

A conspicuous element in the new poetry was due to the appearance in the Middle West of a group of poets who had an energy and a power never before associated with their kind in that region. Vachel Lindsay, for instance, after studying art in Chicago and New York, came to the conclusion that his wisest course lay in the direction of what he called "the new localism." That is, instead of looking through the wide world for beauty he would look for it at home, in his native town in Illinois. The emotions which he found there he would ennoble to the pitch of poetry.

Moreover, he would accomplish these things with native methods, with the method, in particular, of what he called "the higher vaudeville." This was to combine the modes of speaking and singing with which Americans were most familiar, and was to choose the most common themes for treatment. Lindsay himself, in preparation for his career, wandered in the rôle of a poetical tramp through many States, carrying with him his "Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread" and thus paying his way with the least profitable of commodities. His first important poem, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven" (1913), illustrates all his gifts and aims. He shows Booth entering heaven to the tune of a Salvation Army hymn, with drums and tambourines, followed by the human wreckage which he has rescued among the slums of the earth. The heaven which he enters is much like any of the Mid-Western towns which Lindsay knew.

> Jesus came out from the court-house door,
> Stretched his hands above the passing poor.
> Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
> Round and round the mighty court-house square.

As Lindsay, who is as much an actor as a poet, delivers the poem, it seems to be the dream of some ordinary follower of General Booth, based upon his simple conception of the future life, and yet expressed in an idiom which, while based upon his customary speech, goes far beyond it and becomes poetry of a general appeal.

So with Lindsay's poems dealing with the negroes. Whereas most poets, dramatists, or story-tellers have seen these Americans as primarily comic, Lindsay tries to look behind their outward habits to their deeper selves. It is not enough for him to tell the biblical stories of Daniel, of Samson, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba as an eloquent negro preacher might tell them; he contrives to

raise the question why such a person should tell these stories in such a way. In "The Congo" (1915), most famous of the negro poems, Lindsay touches upon what he calls "the irrepressible high spirits" and "the basic savagery" of the blacks only to trace them to an origin which explains them. Back of the negro character, as he sees it, lie centuries of violence and ignorance in the deep jungles of Africa, where men and women now abandoned themselves to their wildest instincts and now cowered before their horrid gods. He has a vision of a mad revel on the banks of the Congo:

> Just then from the doorway, as fat as shotes,
> Came the cake-walk princes in their long red coats,
> Canes with a brilliant lacquer shine,
> And tall silk hats that were red as wine.
> And they pranced with their butterfly partners there,
> Coal-black maidens with pearls in their hair,
> Knee-skirts trimmed with the jessamine sweet,
> And bells on their ankles and little black feet.

The vision changes, and the poet sees a more spiritual religion coming among the negroes, to tame their wild instincts and to disperse their horrid gods:

> And the gray sky opened like a new-rent veil
> And showed the Apostles with their coats of mail.
> In bright white steele they were seated round
> And their fire eyes watched where the Congo wound.
> And the twelve Apostles, from their thrones on high,
> Thrilled all the forest with their heavenly cry:
> "Mumbo-Jumbo will die in the jungle;
> Never again will he hoo-doo you,
> Never again will he hoo-doo you."

Perhaps Lindsay is not quite scientific in this poem, since he ascribes to an ancient racial experience certain traits of the negroes which may be equally ascribable to their more recent fate in America. But at least he is true to

his creed as a poet in that he finds poetry in things near at hand, and in things by most poets either overlooked entirely or else dismissed as merely vulgar.

In all his outstanding poems he produces his effects in this manner. Tramping across Kansas he is disturbed by the rush of motors along the highway, but instead of irritation at the noise and bustle which they make he feels a thrill of pleasure in this grandiose spectacle of his countrymen pouring back and forth across the continent, and he writes "The Santa Fe Trail," a poem full of rhythmical emotion. Turning to such native heroes, heretofore neglected by the poets, as Alexander Campbell, Johnny Appleseed, John L. Sullivan, Lindsay seizes upon the poetic or dramatic qualities in their lives and chants them much as primitive bards chanted primitive prophets or saints or warriors. He stands, it may be said, somewhere between the poet and the orator. Always he has the sense of an audience actually before him. Meeting them half-way by choosing subjects which they are likely to understand, he speaks to them in language which they can understand. Like a popular preacher or politician, he plays upon their habitual sentiments, most of all upon their optimistic belief that human life may be made immeasurably better by reforming zeal. He is the leader of crusades, the defender of fading hopes, the singer of good causes. His enthusiasm so often gets the better of him that he frequently mistakes it for genuine poetical elevation, and the consequence is that he writes a great deal which is hardly better than nonsense. But at his best he is powerful and energetic, and at times he can be very moving, as in "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight," in which Lincoln is seen pacing the dark streets of Springfield in an agony of distress over the war in Europe. At such moments Lindsay dispenses with his usual sound and fury, chooses an intensely local theme,

and connects it by his interpretation with the concerns of the world at large. Herein lies his importance as a poet: he has proved that poetry can begin at home, and that it can find its forms of utterance there.

Masters 1869–

At about the same time with Lindsay there sprang into sudden prominence another poet who in temper is as little like him as possible. Edgar Lee Masters, trained as a lawyer and therefore acquainted with a side of life which Lindsay, celebrator of heroes, hardly notices, had come to doubt that American village life is as idyllic as it has been painted by most writers. Along with the good and shrewd people in the villages, he had concluded, are others who are fools and rogues. It occurred to him, taking his model from the Greek Anthology, to set forth his conclusions in a series of poems which would present a complete picture of a typical Illinois village as he believed it really should be presented. His "Spoon River Anthology" (1915) purports to be made up of the epitaphs in the Spoon River graveyard. But whereas such epitaphs are customarily false or flattering, those in this imagined cemetery are ruthlessly honest and sardonic. Each buried man or woman speaks the truth in uncompromising terms. All the secrets of the village are laid bare. Hardly a reputation is left unstained. The scandal which stalks among the tombs, whispering against the dead, naturally raises questions as to the living. The first effect of the "Anthology" is to wither the sentimental notion that villages are invariably the homes of peace and bliss and industry and virtue.

One thing which greatly interests Masters is the ironic contrast between what is reported and what is true about his people. He shows the most respectable citizens confessing that they did not deserve their respectability; the

most disreputable citizens revealing the fact that they were not so bad as the village thought. Again, he shows husband and wife, or friend and friend, telling things about themselves or about one another which reveal points of view so opposite that unsuspected dramatic situations are thereby brought to light. He points out the difference between the old pioneers, with the courage

> Which labors and suffers and sings
> Under the sun,

and their descendants, with their

> sorrow and weariness,
> Anger, discontent, and drooping hopes.

He tells of Elliott Hawkins, who presumed upon his resemblance to Lincoln and yet gave himself to public activities which Lincoln would have hated, and of Archibald Higbie, who, loathing the village and trying to purge himself of all its influences, yet found that whenever he painted a picture in Rome it suggested Lincoln's face. But these ironical contrasts are not all at the expense of Spoon River. Anne Rutledge, speaking from her humble grave in the loveliest poem of the whole "Anthology," contrives to throw a kind of glory across the whole village:

> Out of me unworthy and unknown
> The vibrations of deathless music;
> "With malice toward none, and charity for all."
> Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,
> And the beneficent face of a nation
> Shining with justice and truth.
> I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
> Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
> Wedded to him, not through union,
> But through separation.
> Bloom forever, O Republic,
> From the dust of my bosom!

While the scandal in "Spoon River Anthology" first catches the attention, it is by no means the sole element. The village has plenty of generosity and vitality underneath the smug and dusty way of life into which it has fallen, as is made clear by the unforgettable portrait of Petit, the Poet:

> Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
> Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel—
> Faint iambics that the full breeze wakens—
> But the pine tree makes a symphony thereof.
> Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
> Ballades by the score with the same old thought:
> The snows and the roses of yesterday are vanished;
> And what is love but a rose that fades?
> Life all around me here in the village:
> Tragedy, comedy, valor, and truth,
> Courage, constancy, heroism, failure—
> All in the loom, and oh what patterns!
> Woodland, meadows, streams, and rivers—
> Blind to all of it all my life long.
> Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
> Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
> Tick, tick, tick, what little iambics,
> While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines?

It is the stale, conventional villagers whom Masters hates; he presents, however, the epitaphs of many others who win his tacit praise by their abundance of thought or feeling, little as the village may have valued them. The difference between him and most of those Americans who have set forth the charm of simple life is that whereas they tend to measure it by somewhat trivial codes of vice and virtue, he really condemns nothing so much as cruelty or meanness and approves nothing so much as courage or magnanimity.

In this respect, though like the greatest satirists of all ages, Masters seemed from the first a novel figure in American literature, which has not as a rule been re-

markable for its satire but which has generally preferred to take a kindly attitude toward the race of man at large and toward Americans in particular. He is above all a satirist, as appears even in those later novels of his which seem to have left satire behind. He is most aroused when he hates injustice and dullness. His "Domesday Book" (1920), the inquest of an imaginary coroner and his jury into the remotest causes and consequences of a suicide which has come under their jurisdiction, is a panorama of American life throughout the disturbed twentieth century. There, as in "Spoon River Anthology," Masters shows that he has no use for outward conformity as such. In a country where the pressure of public opinion has gone too far in the matter of trying to make all men as much alike as possible, out of a false sense of the functions of equality, Masters rebels. He glorifies the men and women who dare to be something out of the ordinary, even though they thereby depart from the beaten path which the populace expects. Above all things he pays tribute to the free mind which ventures to detach itself from the mass of uniformity which makes up the bulk of human conduct. Being so much a rebel, Masters is not invariably an artist. He writes violently, and often crudely, unable to mark his poetry off from his prose by anything more subtle than the rough beat of verse. But satire has an important service to perform in a time when the ideals of life are being reëxamined, and Masters must be recognized as a satirist of great value as well as of great power. And even if he were not valuable for his services in challenging the minor conventionalities, he would be important for the reason that he has brought into American poetry one of its most robust intelligences, one of its most fiery and ironical tongues.

Sandburg 1878–

Lindsay and Masters are both descended from the older American stocks; Carl Sandburg is the son of a Swedish immigrant and so grew up in the midst of the industrialism which faces the modern immigrant as wild nature faced the earlier immigrant. Though Sandburg was born in a small Illinois town, and during his youth drifted about the Middle West much as any youth might have done, he from the first found his natural themes for poetry among factories and railroads, in cities and slums, in the midst of noise and under a pall of smoke, and called his books by such names as "Chicago Poems" (1915) and "Smoke and Steel" (1920). Trying to voice the aspiration of some humble thing to have a share in great enterprises, he imagines steel, in "Prayers of Steel," as praying to be laid upon an anvil, beaten into a crowbar, hammered into a spike.

> Drive me into the girders that hold a sky-scraper together.
> Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
> Let me be the great nail holding a sky-scraper through blue nights into white stars.

Such an image would never have occurred to one of the older American poets, who instead might have put the prayer into the mouth of a plow eager to break the stubborn sod or of an ax eager to level the shaggy forest. Sandburg by his choice of steel as his symbol reveals himself a poet of the new order of life in the United States.

Moreover, he is the poet not of any of the traditional communities, such as Boston or Philadelphia or Richmond, but of Chicago, the vast, sprawling, windy city where life moves at a pace which could hardly have been indicated in the smooth lines of any dainty versifier.

What Sandburg likes in Chicago is its newness and hopefulness, which a different poet might call its rawness and callowness. In his city Sandburg finds the unassimilated materials of poetry, and indeed of civilization, not yet shaped into established forms. Anything can happen here, and he is ready for anything that can happen. Above all he admires the superb insolence of the untamed capital which, as he points out in his poem called "The Windy City," has such a daring motto:

> Go to it and remember this city fished from its depths a text: "independent as a hog on ice."
> Venice is a dream of soft waters, Vienna and Bagdad recollections of dark spears and wild turbans; Paris is a thought in Monet gray on scabbards, fabrics, façades; London is a fact in a fog filled with the moaning of transatlantic whistles; Berlin sits amid white scrubbed quadrangles and torn arithmetics and testaments; Moscow brandishes a flag and repeats a dance figure of a man who walks like a bear.
> Chicago fished from its depths a text: "independent as a hog on ice."

Thus admiring the insolence of Chicago, Sandburg is equally insolent. He too discards the past and its patterns; he too reaches out and grasps whatever seems to him full of life and molds it into his own uses; he too speaks his own language, though it comes to him from the streets rather than from the dictionaries. To the extent that Chicago is the metropolis of the present and the future, Sandburg is the poet of those eras.

But he is not merely a voice for the tumultous elements in American life; he is also a voice for human pity and tenderness. Brooding over the spectacle of existence, so torn and confused as he sees it, he writes of old men and women who have nothing left but memories, of frail spirits who have been put to tasks which are too difficult for them and who stumble along the

paths of toil, of strong spirits broken by the struggle, of friendship and beauty and love. Because life is as good as it is, he forgives it for being no better. Like all vigorous men with a sense of the hardness of fate, he is very tender toward children. To one of his own daughters he addresses a poem, "Winter Milk," which in a few eloquent lines says what all fathers feel about their little daughters, in whom youth is now so lovely though it must pass so soon:

There are dreams in your eyes, Helga.
Tall reaches of wind sweep the clear blue.
The winter is young yet, so young.
Only a little cupful of winter has touched your lips.

Nor is Sandburg always somber in his attitude toward children. At times he is so gay and whimsical that he has taken the trouble to create, in his "Rootabaga" stories, a kind of nonsense language, largely drawn from slang, in which to tell stories which are roguish and grotesque and which yet serve to instruct children in much which it is important for them to know about the world in which they are to live when they have grown up. Perhaps nothing about him is more remarkable than the fact that he is at once so bold and challenging toward adults and so sympathetic and affectionate toward the young.

This same range of sympathies appears throughout his work. He can explode in "The Lawyers Know Too Much" with a guffaw of disgust at those persons who seem to him to live only to make life more complicated:

The work of a bricklayer goes to the blue.
The knack of a mason outlasts a moon.
The hand of a plasterer holds a room together.
The land of a farmer wishes him back again.
Singers of songs and dreamers of plays

Build a house no wind blows over.
The lawyers—tell me why a hearse horse snickers hauling a lawyer's bones.

Yet he can also sing, in his fashion, sweet songs about the most ancient emotions which poets ever have felt, such as this song called "In Tall Grass":

Bees and a honeycomb in the dried head of a horse in a pasture corner—a skull in the tall grass and a buzz and a buzz of the yellow honey-hunters.
And I ask no better a winding sheet (over the earth and under the sun.)
Let the bees go honey-hunting with yellow blur of wings in the dome of my head, in the rumbling singing arch of my skull.
Let there be wings and yellow dust and the drone of dreams of honey—who loses and remembers?—who keeps and forgets?
In a blue sheen of moon over the bones and under the hanging honeycomb the bees come home and the bees sleep.

This range of sympathies, indeed, is Sandburg's chief trait. He is native and local enough to be able to make poems about the Chicago stock-yards; he is universal enough to respond to poetical sentiments from whatever quarter.

Very often, as in the case of Vachel Lindsay, Sandburg does not transmute his materials into poetry but leaves them still rough or underdone. This is not, as some readers insist, because he has chosen unpoetical materials to write about; actually there is nothing which cannot be made into poetry if the poet is competent. It is because Sandburg cannot always finish what he has begun. Full of pioneer audacity, he will not accept any help from any poetic method except his own. Disagreeing with the great majority of Americans, he finds few audiences already prepared to share the thrill which he

feels at sight of the undisciplined forces of modern society. He will not deal with common themes, and thus reap the harvest of other poets who have taught mankind how to enjoy those themes in verse. He will not select his words from among the words which the practice of other poets has made to seem poetical, but insists on selecting any word or phrase he likes and forcing it into good usage. The consequences are that many of his poems are hard for most readers to understand, and many others seem unpleasant to the best-intentioned readers by reason of their uncouth images and violent ideas. But at his best he is full of haunting loveliness, and at all but his worst he is full of fire and energy.

Imagism

For the most part, the new poetry was produced rather by individuals than by schools, but there was one distinctive group of which something must be said. That group, working both in England and the United States more or less upon the model of certain French contemporaries, had a definite poetical theory and set out about 1915 to do definite things. They called themselves Imagists, because they believed that poetry should first of all present an image, that is, "should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous." They believed, in addition, that poetry should use the language of common speech, employing "always the *exact* word, not the nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word"; that it should "create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not . . . copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods"; that poets should have "absolute freedom in the choice of subject," whether chosen from the present or from the past; that a poem should be "hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite"; and that "concentration is of the very essence of poetry." These doctrines, the Imagists realized and insisted, were not new,

but had latterly been neglected, with the result that poetry had become either too smooth or too cloudy. Like Wordsworth in his time, the group was making war upon poetical diction and the restriction of poetry to a few established themes; but they went further and made war also upon Wordsworth, and more explicitly upon Whitman, for their "vague generalities." "It is for this reason," they said, "that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art." It might almost be maintained that they were deliberately turning from Whitman to Emily Dickinson; and while they were not quite doing that, they were at least basing their principles upon her kind of practice. They were, in other words, doing what they could to reduce poetry to its irreducible elements, making it simple and direct and vivid, even though in so doing they might have to discard many of the riper and ampler charms to which poetry has traditionally laid claim.

Amy Lowell 1874–1925

Of the American Imagists, without any question, the best-known poet was Amy Lowell. She was, however, more than a member of a school. She had already thought a great deal about poetry, and had tried numerous forms of it in her own work, before she became interested in Imagism; and she brought to the new doctrine a vigorous critical intelligence and a pugnacious disposition which helped it to win a hearing. Cultivated and energetic, she wrote and spoke in behalf of experimentation in verse, defending poetic practices which were ridiculed or misunderstood, explaining the aims of neglected poets, turning to the poetry of many other literatures to find illustrations which would prove her points. She thus furnished a basis for argument in favor of free verse of various sorts which it did not have before she joined the cause, at least so far as the larger public knew. Her

own work, too, shows the range of which the new poetry is capable. She composed in severely classical forms as well as in more novel ones. She chose now to reproduce the delicate formality of Japanese verse and now to manipulate the effects of cadenced prose. She explored the past for her subjects or took them from familiar legends of New England. She adorned her narratives with gorgeous colors or permitted them to be as bare as dialect demands. In particular she showed that the methods she upheld can be applied not only to brief snatches, merely glittering fragments, but to long stories in verse as well. It would, indeed, be difficult to overestimate her services to the new movement. She gave it prestige by her culture, which was that of a stock long eminent in Massachusetts, and yet did not shrink from the robust task of leading a cause which has had to be emphatic and iconoclastic in order to make its way in the world.

Her positive achievement as a poet was doubtless less than her achievements as a critic and a spokesman. Though the body of her work is impressive, she produced almost no individual poems which sting and haunt as the triumphant poems of the more memorable poets do. Reading a volume by Miss Lowell is, in a sense, like walking through a museum in which many objects of art have been arranged with admirable taste. The light falls upon them at the proper angle; they are grouped to the best advantage; they exhibit charming colors and textures and forms. But, as has been said, this poet seemed to be interested hardly so much in the stuff as in the stuffs of life. That is, she painted the vivid surfaces of human existence and did not always communicate the drama stirring beneath them. True to her creed, she confined herself to the essential image, drawn with a hard, clear outline, contemptuous of the

softer moods in which the eye relaxes its vigilance and takes in beauty without always testing it very precisely. She rarely burst into spontaneous eloquence or flowered instinctively into song. The objects in her lovely museum therefore do not always come to life, and have sometimes the appearance of something not much better than specimens. By and by they cause a kind of eye-strain, from having demanded so close an attention. Occasionally, however, Miss Lowell struck an unmistakable note, as in "Men, Women, and Ghosts" (1916), with "Patterns," which is justly the most famous of her poems. There the lady who speaks has lived so long in a stiff, formal world that the tightness of her garments and the squareness of the paths in her garden have come to symbolize her fate, which keeps her at home in a tense anxiety while her lover is away at war. Then comes the news of his death, and the lady, aware that he can now have no chance to rescue her from her prim life, cries out in rebellion against it. At that moment the actual woman, however cramping the pattern of her life may be, is revealed in a flash. Such flashes are the essence of true poetry.

Edna St. Vincent Millay 1892–

Associated with no poetical school, Edna St. Vincent Millay is yet associated, at least in the popular mind, with the new poetry as is no other of the new poets. To this eminence she has undoubtedly been helped by the simplicity of her methods. She has not devoted her energies to experimenting with new technics or to arguing about them. Her only novelty lies in her freshness and her directness. Though she has many beautiful, daring thoughts, she has contrived to utter them in a language which never has to be puzzled out, even by readers of the most old-fashioned taste. The largest part of her work consists of lyrics and ballads and sonnets. She

shows no signs of being fretted by the bondage of rhyme; she is content to use easy and not unexpected meters. Her only concern, apparently, has been to drive home the arrows of her wit and beauty, singing as they go. Her readers, grateful for her art without, in many cases, being aware of it, have therefore fixed their attention upon the ideas and emotions which she expresses. In them they have found what they believe to be the quintessence of the spirit which now characterizes the new age. Those who dislike the spirit call it forward and irreverent and immoral; those who like it call it high-hearted and courageous and independent. And yet both parties of opinion have been so pleased by the swift loveliness of Miss Millay's poems that they have, with or without approval, accepted them for their own sake.

Her career began in 1912, when, at the age of twenty, she published her remarkable poem called "Renascence." It set forth a vivid experience in vivid words. Already a true mystic, though so young, she had been visited by a powerful mood in which she felt that her soul filled all the world, and that she could hear "the ticking of Eternity." But the suffering and pity of mankind so pressed upon her that she shrank from it, and imagined herself buried in the cool earth, happy in her escape. In this comfortable death, however, she suddenly remembered the beauty which she had left behind. The memory was stronger than her desire for peace.

> Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
> And hailed the earth with such a cry
> As is not heard save from a man
> Who has been dead, and lives again.
> About the trees my arms I wound;
> Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;
> I raised my quivering arms on high;
> I laughed and laughed into the sky.

Exultant in her rebirth, she concluded that it lies with the soul to be the master of space and time, or to be the victim of them.

> East and West will pinch the heart
> That cannot keep them pushed apart;
> And he whose soul is flat—the sky
> Will cave in on him by and by.

Never since that adventure, which seems almost an allegory of young America, has Miss Millay stood on the side of flat souls or pinched hearts. She has been the voice of courage.

Though born in Maine, she came soon to be thought of in connection with Greenwich Village, that district of New York City most favored by all kinds of artists as their place of residence. There, according to the popular notion, art and gaiety flourish without a care, safely removed from customary dullness. The spirit of the place has been supposed to be distilled in Miss Millay's volume "A Few Figs from Thistles" (1921), particularly in a quatrain laughingly called "First Fig":

> My candle burns at both ends;
> It will not last the night;
> But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
> It gives a lovely light!

This is actually no more than a merry version of Emerson's grave statement that "Beauty is its own excuse for being," but it aroused responsive echoes in many readers who had grown tired of hearing life forever called real and earnest, and who wanted to admire verve and audacity no less than prudence. It is these brighter qualities which Miss Millay celebrates. Her poems are concerned not with sacrifice but with freedom, not with

duty but with joy, not with obedience but with rapture. They may touch the deepest themes, but they are never somber, because they are always gallant. At the same time, they are not shallow. A very alert intelligence confirms Miss Millay in her instinctive feeling that if it is better to be alive than to be dead, so is it better to be wholly alive than to be half alive. And as she does not believe in brooding, so she does not believe in keeping silent. She speaks out boldly on all the topics which interest her or the imagined speakers of her poems. Indeed, it has distressed certain of her readers to find Miss Millay permitting women in her poems to speak as candidly about love as men have always been permitted to do. Her women do not tremble at the thought of being loved or whimper at the thought of not being loved again. They are eager for love; they praise the beauty of their lovers; they can laugh at love in the midst of its desperations; they recover from it, if it fails them, and live to love again. In "The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems" (1923), in one of the most beautiful love sonnets in the language, Miss Millay thus expresses a sense of love's variety and variability:

> I know I am but summer to your heart,
> And not the full four summers of the year;
> And you must welcome from another part
> Such noble moods as are not mine, my dear.
> No gracious weight of golden fruits to sell
> Have I, nor any wise and wintry thing;
> And I have loved you all too long and well
> To carry still the high sweet breast of spring.
> Wherefore I say: O love, as summer goes,
> I must be gone, steal forth with silent drums,
> That you may hail anew the bird and rose
> When I come back to you, as summer comes.
> Else will you seek, at some not distant time,
> Even your summer in another clime.

This sense of love in Miss Millay is in keeping with her sense of life at large. She loves life for its beauty, which she finds in very definite objects, not in abstractions. "She loves the special countenance of every season, the hot light of the sun, gardens of flowers with old, fragrant names, the salt smell of the sea along her native Maine coast, the sound of sheep-bells and dripping eaves and the unheard sound of city streets, the homely facts of houses in which men and women live, tales of quick deeds and eager heroisms, the cool, kind love of young girls for one another, the color of words, the beat of rhythm." But like all who love life and beauty, she is always haunted by the knowledge that both are mortal. Because she loves them so much she knows they cannot last, and because she knows they cannot last she loves them all the more while they do. She who has written lyrics and ballads of the most dashing insolence, has written exquisitely tender dirges, such as her "Prayer to Persephone," in "Second April":

> Be to her, Persephone,
> All the things I might not be;
> Take her head upon your knee.
> She that was so proud and wild,
> Flippant, arrogant and free,
> She that had no need of me,
> Is a little lonely child
> Lost in Hell,—Persephone,
> Take her head upon your knee;
> Say to her, "My dear, my dear,
> It is not so dreadful here."

Never has a mother, in life or in poetry, uttered a more lovely prayer over her dead child. But it is all the more lovely for the reason that Miss Millay has made the mother of this poem speak a little lightly as well as tenderly. Light words are often as strong as

the heaviest. Because she has known this, Miss Millay has added a very special quality to the poetry of her time.

There are many other poets who would have to be added to these few to make the record anything like complete, and some of the many are only a little less distinctive or typical than the few who have been selected. A general introduction to the subject, however, must be content to leave to special students of poetry the task of studying in more detail the swarm of poets who have made the past decade memorable. Such special students will be struck in particular by the numerous writers of lyrics, for the most part women, and by the even more numerous experimenters in new forms, many of them satirists, who impart a variety and color which American poetry has had at no other period in its history. Above all, such special students will perceive that the making of poetry is a continuous process, not an art once possessed by great masters but now lost and forgotten.

CHAPTER II

PROSE FICTION

PROSE fiction in 1890 was not so near the end of an epoch as was poetry. Though William Dean Howells, for instance, had done nearly all his best work and was recognized to be the leader of the realists who were the prevailing school, he had still a score of years before him in which he was to continue his suave representation of American life. Henry James, having completed his middle period, as it subsequently proved, had not yet quite made up his mind that it was vain for him to hope to win a wide audience and that he might as well decide to please himself since he could not please any considerable number of novel-readers. Mark Twain had published most of his most characteristic books, but had hardly entered that fascinating chapter of his life which was to reveal him as a man of bitter thought as well as a humorist, a commentator upon the times in unstinted language, a kind of prophet who was to be listened to with more respect after his death than before it. Among the minor writers of fiction, however, a change was impending. Ever since the Civil War there had been under way a more or less concerted effort to exploit the materials for fiction which the whole country afforded. In every section and in almost every State some novelist or story-writer had set forth the peculiarities of local custom and speech and mental attitude until there had resulted a body of literature which might have been called an imaginative census. But this fiction tended,

unfortunately, to be thin. Too much of it had been written by men and women who were collecting curiosities instead of looking through surface peculiarities to the general truth of life; too much of it had been written by men and women who were led by their nearness to their material to feel obliged to be amiable toward it and therefore to omit from their records much that might not seem pleasant. Now a group of younger novelists was beginning to hold that it was less important to be pleasant than to be truthful, and they set out with zest to find the truth and to bring it to the light. Without doubt they tended, being in rebellion against the older school, to believe that the official realism of the time was less truthful than it was, but they did intensify and deepen the concerns of fiction, and they founded the tradition of naturalism which has more or less persisted ever since.

Crane 1871–1900

Modern American fiction may be said to begin with Stephen Crane. From the first he believed that conventional ways of thought are only so much cotton in which mankind likes to pack itself. Too unschooled to look for reality behind the accepted manners of the race, he was too honest to pretend that he saw it there. If he could not see life eye to eye, he did not care to see it at all. Reality for him, to be reality at all, had to be obvious and intense, as he thought it is in the slums or on the battle-field. Born in New Jersey, he laid the scene of the first of his two significant novels in a New York slum, with what at the time seemed daring candor. In "Maggie" (1893) a girl of the old Bowery neighborhood, driven from home by the drunken brutality of her mother, seeks refuge with a young tough of her acquaintance, loses him to a more practised woman, and drowns herself. Crane did not expurgate or moralize his story. Such things, he knew, happen, and he

required no other excuse for his narrative. At a time when most American novelists would have hesitated to touch this theme at all, or if they had touched it would have tried to justify themselves by disguising it as a sermon, he let the facts speak for themselves. He wanted to communicate the matter directly to his readers, so that they would have lived something and not merely have learned it. To him any apology or comment would have seemed heartless, an intrusion of his private opinion into Maggie's tragedy.

This first novel of Crane's was neglected by the public till after the publication of his second, "The Red Badge of Courage" (1895), which was too striking to be overlooked. It was a war story of a sort new to the United States. Crane had refused to pay any attention to the books which had been doing what they could to make the Civil War out an epic conflict, full of pomp and heroism. Instead, he had talked to old soldiers in their franker hours of reminiscence. As a result, he chose for his hero an ordinary recruit, fresh from an inland farm, and carried him through his first experience in actual fighting. As the recruit naturally has no notion of the general plan of battle, he has to obey commands that he does not understand, that he resents, that he hates. He suffers agonies of fatigue and almost a catastrophe of fear before he becomes accustomed to his situation. Perhaps he seems unusually imaginative, but he is represented without too much subtlety. He speaks a convincing boyish dialect. His sensations are limited to something like his spiritual capacity. He is a pawn of war, but he is the item which, Crane held, must not be forgotten in any consideration of war. For when all has been taken into account, war must be judged by its effect not upon the statesmen who start it or upon the generals who wage it but upon the average men who ac-

tually endure it. And this idea of Crane is reflected in the art of the "Red Badge." The young soldier is the focus of the whole action, the lens through which the battle is perceived. Being in the fear of death, he is not a mere transparent lens. The battle takes a kind of mad shape within his consciousness as the tangled details of it stream through him. Though Crane had never seen a battle when he wrote this book, he managed to make it extraordinarily convincing. Even readers who must have felt that he was unjustifiably disregarding the heroic and throwing the grand style overboard, admitted his concentrated power.

During the few years remaining to him after the publication of his masterpiece Crane lived a vivid life, chiefly as a war correspondent in various parts of the world. Of his later fiction, his short stories are on the whole better than his novels. "The Open Boat" tells a straight story of adventure with breathless ferocity. "The Monster" exposes the stupidity of public opinion in a narrow town. "The Blue Hotel" shows fate working blindly and causelessly in the muddled lives of chance-met men. At times Crane has a good deal of comic force, but always he is spare, pungent, intense. By his intensity, above all else, he attracted attention, and for that he is still noted, even though he has had many followers. Yet he is never obscure. Unlike Emily Dickinson, a poet whom he admired and in some respects imitated, he is as much a journalist as an imagist. Such lucidity as his, indeed, is almost poetry. It perhaps accounts for his persistent charm, the charm of a free mind resolutely revealing itself. Though he is often, in his writing, crude and incorrect, he never ceases to be intelligent. This intelligence of his brings him very close to his material, which he does not thereafter hold at arm's length. He delights in every aspect of reality, however

ruthlessly he may expose it. It does not matter that he is ironical, for irony may be only the other side of tenderness, as it is with Crane. But the generation before Crane had so often been sentimental that he, as a rebel against it, could not allow his passion for life to have a loose tongue. He kept it under control and thus gave added color to representations of life to which he seemed to be giving only clearness of outline.

Norris 1870–1902

With Crane it is customary to associate Frank Norris, another novelist who died young after a brilliant and effective career. Born in Chicago, a student in Paris, he became an author in California, and thus had a wide view of the continent on which he lived. As a protest against provincialism he wanted to continentalize American literature, and planned two vast trilogies, neither of which he lived to finish. One would have been concerned with the battle of Gettysburg, a novel for each day, and would have exhibited the whole nation as struggling on that fateful ground; this he left untouched. Of his Epic of the Wheat he wrote two parts: "The Octopus" (1901), which deals with the production of wheat in California, and "The Pit" (1903), which deals with the distribution of wheat through the Chicago Board of Trade. There was to have been a third part called "The Wolf," dealing with the consumption of American wheat in Europe; this too remained undone. But though these plans were too large to be carried out in a short life, their largeness is reflected in the work Norris actually did.

"The Pit" is on the whole inferior to "The Octopus," perhaps because trafficking in wheat is essentially a less significant process than growing it. The Octopus to which the title refers is a railroad which holds the wheat-growers of California in its cruel tentacles, able to say whether or not they shall ship their grain to

market, and thereby to illustrate the power which economic machinery has over the primary elements of life. Agriculture and Trade have come to grips in a grandiose drama. Norris sympathizes with the farmers so thoroughly that he heaps upon the head of the villain every accusation, making the agent of the railroad the symbol for all the novelist hates in the system which thus comes wantonly between food and hunger. In the end, though the farmers are beaten, the agent is suffocated under a stream of wheat which is again a symbol—"the wheat which comes up from the abundant earth and moves irresistibly to its appointed purpose, guided, of course, by men, and fought and played over by them, but always mightier than they and always their master as well as their sustenance." These cosmic implications, however, do not keep the story from presenting a picture of actual life in California, of plowing, planting, harvesting, sheep-herding, merrymaking, rabbit-hunting, with the human matters of love, labor, birth, and death. Though the struggle itself is sordid and tragic, there are many incidental details of loveliness and goodness. The style is strong, the movement rapid, the pictures alive. If the book falls short of the first rank, it is only by reason of a certain emotional exaggeration which was one of the results of Norris's fiery zeal to find some general truth behind all appearances.

Though Norris called himself a naturalist in fiction, his zeal for reality has more than a touch of the romantic in it. Less clearly an artist than Crane, and perhaps less intelligent, he could not be content to tell a story and let it hint its meanings; he had to interpret them. He was constantly looking, too, for elemental instincts to chonicle. His heroes are nearly all violent, wilful men; his heroines are nearly all women of a rich, deep vitality. What is virtually the same pair of lovers appears in each

of his novels, as if he could not imagine any other kind of love. And whether or not his characters are concerned with love, they do not have much range of intellect, so largely are they taken up with the operation of those instincts which have come to be known as red-blooded. Norris had, in short, rather more force than direction. But he had so much force that it is impossible not to be stirred when he is at his best, and not to regret that his work ended so soon. He thought and wrote about his art in a way to show that he was laying the foundation for achievements which might have been remarkable if his mind had eventually caught up with his emotions.

London 1876–1916

What was elemental in Frank Norris became absymal in the third member of this gifted trio, Jack London. A Californian, the son of a pioneer who had not prospered, he spent his youth as a laborer and a tramp and an explorer, with no thought of writing books. But when he did take to the pen, he had an enviable amount of experience to work with. Moreover, having become a socialist and a revolutionist, he was full of resentment against the established order of society and full of hope that it would shortly be overthrown. His doctrines serve as the basis of his many controversial and autobiographical books, and hardly less as the basis of his fiction. Believing that there is a natural war between the classes, London saw human history in terms of the struggle for survival. Life for him was one long epic of which his stories were episodes. His favorite heroes, whether wolves or dogs or pugilists or sailors or vagabonds, have all of them much the same kind of instincts and the same kind of fate. The hero of "Martin Eden" (1909) is London under another name, learning to write;

the struggle seems as enormous as if life and death were the issue. In "The Sea-Wolf" (1904) the principal figure is a ship-captain who dominates his crew with a cold brutality, which he justifies by an appeal to Nietzsche and to the dogma that the strong are entitled to command the weak; he becomes finally, however, the victim of a paralysis against which even his strength is insufficient. And in London's masterpiece, "The Call of the Wild" (1903), all his ideas are given dramatic expression in the story of a dog which escapes from human control to go back to the wild as leader of a pack of wolves.

As in most stories about animals, the narrative is sentimentalized. Buck, the dog, has a human psychology. Though no man can know whether a dog has thoughts or not, Buck is shown thinking throughout the story. His thoughts are suspiciously like his creator's. He learns the law of the wilderness with a philosophical quickness; he dreams of his ancestors and instantly recognizes in them the source of the new traits which are developing in him now that he too is running wild. But whether or not London was justified as a scientist in making Buck so nearly human, he was justified as an artist. The story, after all, was meant to be read by human beings, and it was written by one of them. Something autobiographical in "The Call of the Wild" gives it much of its power. Telling of Buck's initiation into a hard and dangerous life, London remembered his own initiation into vagabondage; telling of Buck's adjustments to the climate and customs of Alaska, London remembered his own struggles with the Klondike in the days when he had felt that all nature was conspiring to destroy him and that he could preserve himself only if he resorted to every trick and used all the strength he had. Memory stirred his imagination as well as furnished him

with realistic details. The narrative is no more overburdened with superfluities than an Arctic expedition; it is swift and alert, packed with excitement and peril. And it has in addition certain qualities which were later to become less evident in London's work. It exhibits a fine sensitiveness to natural beauty, a robust, moving, genuine current of poetry which enriches both style and plot.

This decrease in beauty, which accounts in part for the inferiority of some of the many books which London wrote after he became famous, was due to the hasty, casual habits which he formed. He wanted to be a man of affairs as well as an artist, wanted to prove that his pen was as good as another man's fist or sword or purse. Consequently he wrote as fast rather than as well as he could. There grew upon him, moreover, a kind of obsession for primitive emotions, for violent conflicts, for terrible sufferings. He came to write as if he thought that reality is to be found only upon the plane of naked warfare between man and man, between man and society, between class and class, between mankind and nature. In a world which is much of it civilized, he was thus limited in the range of his subjects, and he tended to repeat himself, all the more so since his public, liking what he had done, demanded that he continue indefinitely in the same channel. The consequence was that, though he wrote many more books than Crane or Norris, he did not write many more good books than they. He did, however, carry on the program laid down by the other two, and won a victory for those novelists who felt that they need not restrict themselves to dealing with the surface lives of respectable Americans. It is hardly his fault if his successors have gone beyond him to the point where red blood is made to appear as conventional a thing as blue blood ever was.

O. Henry
1862–1910

Somewhat apart from these three novelists, and yet of a temper not so different, was a remarkable writer of short stories who used the pseudonym O. Henry instead of his real name, William Sydney Porter. Like Jack London, O. Henry saw much of life before he began to write about it. Born in North Carolina, he spent his boyhood there, went as a young man to Texas, visited South America, served a term in a Federal prison for embezzlement, and had reached the age of forty when he settled down in New York for the remainder of his life. His rapid popularity came first as a result of his cleverness, in the management of surprising plots and in the reproduction of slangy vernacular speech. It was soon increased by the realization on the part of his public that he had discovered what seemed to be a new province of fiction: the world of those ordinary New Yorkers who make up the bulk of the city's population, and who had hitherto been rather neglected by literature. But O. Henry did not confine himself to the metropolis; he wrote stories which had their settings in the South, in the Southwest, and in Latin America; and finally it was seen that he had discovered not so much a new province as a new process of finding and setting forth the romance and the comedy and the tragedy of average existence.

Technically speaking, O. Henry is a raconteur. His stories are all short, his plots simple, his manner free and easy. He constantly interjects himself into his narratives, commenting upon them to his hearers. Seeming to have been everywhere, and to have seen everything, he reports his observations. What has interested him, however, is not himself but the persons he has encountered on his travels. He appears never to have overlooked any of them, and indeed appears to have got at all their secrets. Yet it is their customary hours which he has

chiefly noted. He prefers not to probe too deep. As a raconteur, he avoids the somber, private emotions which cannot be discussed in a light tone. As a raconteur, too, he chooses episodes or situations which can be made to startle by the outcome. In this he was aided by the delight he took in such little accidents of fate as that which happens in his most familiar story, "The Gifts of the Magi." A husband and wife are each anxious to give the other a Christmas present, though they are very poor. The wife sells her hair, which is her greatest charm, to buy a chain for her husband's watch; the husband sells his watch, which is his proudest possession, to buy a set of combs for his wife's hair. The irony of the double sacrifice is of course far from tragic, since the husband and wife, whatever their disappointment, can promptly forget it in their joy over the affection which prompted their acts. Almost always O. Henry has what has been called the short memory of comedy. Instead of assembling evidences to prove that fortune is malign, as persons of a tragic disposition do, he looks at each prank of fortune separately, laughs, and passes on.

So much good humor might grow tiresome were it not for the wit and variety with which it is accompanied. As it is, O. Henry at times is undeniably sentimental. He brings tears as readily as he brings laughter, but he rarely awakens the profounder moods which lie below the reach of either. Like those earlier writers who had exploited their own neighborhoods by peering about them for all the local peculiarities, he finds his search for things to tell rewarded by the discovery of more cases of goodness and kindness than the facts perhaps warrant. And yet he has a comic vigor which distinguishes him from the tribe of sentimentalists. His humor keeps his good humor from cloying or from turning sour. In what is probably his best story, "A Municipal Report," he had a

chance to be merely pathetic in his account of a woman hopelessly bullied by her worthless husband. But he was no more content to do that than he was content to exploit his materials for their own sake, without making anything of them. He rounds the action out with a robust deed, the murder of the husband by a faithful servant. Though the plot is romantic enough, it is complete, not a mere fragment of local color. Taken all together, his stories furnish an amazing transcript of American life. When due allowance has been made for the farcical nature of many of his episodes, he will still be seen to have given reality to an impressive number of characters and to have shown the working of normal human emotions in an impressively varied number of instances.

In two of his books, "Cabbages and Kings" and "The Gentle Grafter," the same personages are repeated from story to story, but as a rule the volumes have no more unity than comes from their restriction to some special community as the scene, and this only in the case of the volumes devoted, like "The Four Million" (1906), to New York, or like "Heart of the West" (1907), to a wider region. The total effect of the body of O. Henry's work is that of a gigantic miscellany. He wrote in haste. He did not avoid the cultivation of certain mannerisms, such as the almost invariable surprise in his endings. Being extraordinarily full of his materials, he poured them out in a profuse stream. Being extraordinarily successful in pleasing his public, he made no particular effort to improve his art. Other writers imitated his methods without being able to capture his peculiar charm, and the art of the short story became as a consequence looser and more casual than it had been before him. In a sense, he cheapened the form, but he extended its scope and made it the most democratic form of literature in America.

Garland 1860–

Meanwhile there was a freshening of the tendency toward realism in the Middle West, where the tendency had begun as far back as the seventies and had never quite been lost. Even before Crane, Hamlin Garland of Wisconsin had parted company with the smoother novelists of the established school. In particular, he called attention to the hard lives of prairie farmers in "Main-Travelled Roads" (1891), which was a protest against the idyllic pictures of rural life then common. The men in his book wrestle despairingly with their bitter tasks, never sure when they may be beaten by nature or by the money-lender. The women are sacrificed to overwork until they have lost all their charms along with their hopes. The pressure of life is too heavy to be borne except by the ruthless or the crafty. This frontier, Garland wanted to point out, had its victims who must not be forgotten in the romantic chorus raised to celebrate the victors. He propounded their dilemmas, with pity less than with anger, in level language. That he knew farm life, on the whole, better than most other novelists then writing about it, does not alone account for the excellence of his book. Back of it lay a long course of thought about the problem of needless poverty. And if that imparts to "Main-Travelled Roads" its intellectual consistency, a genuine human affection imparts to it the note of human dignity which characterizes it.

Having written a few other books in this vein, Garland for years gave himself to the writing of inferior romances about the Rocky Mountains. They were inferior because in these regions he was a visitor, and not a native, and he tended to fall into the errors of enthusiasm which he had challenged in his prairie novels. He later returned to his true material in "A Son of the Middle Border" (1917), which is indeed autobiograph-

ical, but hardly more so than "Main-Travelled Roads" or "Prairie Folks." Whether autobiography or fiction, Garland's best work concerns itself with essentially the same theme. The golden hopes of the pioneers, it keeps saying, were largely illusion. Only those among them who could live on hope could feel sure that the glory of the westward march made up for its discomforts and agonies. Many of them, his stories show, were like the young recruit in "The Red Badge of Courage." They could not see any intelligible whole of which they were a part. Of such pioneers Garland offers this most convincing record. After him, as after Crane, novelists could not lose the individual in the type quite so easily as their predecessors had done.

Dreiser 1871–

From Indiana came the novelist who is generally admitted to be the leader of the new school in American fiction, Theodore Dreiser. His "Sister Carrie" (1900) was both neglected and abused, and he has ever since been a center of controversy as no other native novelist has been for so long a period. Just why, it is not quite easy to say. Perhaps the explanation may be found in the thorough way in which he manages, in his novels, to cast doubt upon almost every rule of life which is accepted as certain by the majority of men. This he does by narrating, without reproach, the lives of persons who seem, for some reason, to avoid the expected penalties of their misdeeds and the expected rewards of their good conduct. For example, Carrie drifts from her native village first to Chicago and then to New York, seems to feel little repentance for her irregular course of life, and in the end becomes a noted actress with hardly any serious effort. And if she seems to have few of the standard moral sentiments, so has Dreiser so far as she is concerned. He does not judge her; he only pities her when she is distressed. Likewise

with Hurstwood, who leaves his wife and family to take up with Carrie, gradually loses his standing and his self-respect, and goes to pieces; though the account of Hurstwood's downfall is one of the triumphs of fiction, Dreiser nowhere assumes that the man got what he deserved for his offenses. To assume that, for Dreiser, would be to imply that he accepted the ordinary moral code of society as fixed and just. Instead, he appears to hold that such codes are only customs and that individuals are rather unfortunate than blameworthy when they come in conflict with them. He refuses to believe that the novelist is obliged to be a moralist.

In all his novels Dreiser has vexed those readers who want to meet in fiction only the sort of persons they would like to meet in life. He has insisted upon choosing his characters as he pleases, and upon tracing their careers without reference to current susceptibilities. Cowperwood, the hero of both "The Financier" and "The Titan," rises from obscurity to fame and wealth, but he does so by shocking methods. He bullies his rivals, evades the laws, and takes his pleasures along the way with a high hand. Witla, in "The 'Genius,'" no less irresponsibly pursues the life of art. What interests Dreiser in these men is their vitality. Unlike more timid creatures, who struggle to make themselves conform to the established patterns of life and suffer if they cannot, the true Dreiser hero sets out for a definite goal, plods resistlessly toward it, and does not mind if at times he runs counter to the customs and morals of his age. His desire for something or other is all the authority he asks. That is to say, he trusts his instincts. Dreiser's blunt chronicles of the working of such instincts make many readers uncomfortable, because they feel, perhaps dimly, that if human society is to hold itself together it must demand that many individual instincts be subordinated to

the general good. A writer like Dreiser, who is interested more in those instincts than in the general good, therefore seems dangerous. He in effect glorifies the natural man at the expense of the obedient member of society.

What makes Dreiser so irritating to certain of his readers is not that he is at war with society, which he can hardly be said to be, but that he is in doubt as to the reality of its laws and customs. Positive enmity can be forgiven more easily than indifference or skepticism. The same quality, however, gives him an advantage when it comes to creating characters. He is willing to tell all he knows about them, just as he is willing to take them wherever he finds them. His "Twelve Men" (1919) illustrates this. Rarely generalizing, he portrays a dozen actual persons he has known. All his native honesty is brought to the task of making his account fit the real facts precisely. All his large tolerance is exercised to present the truth without malice or excuses. These, he seems to say, are members of the human race. They might, no doubt, have been better or wiser than they were, but they were not. They had each of them a set of qualities which no other person has ever combined in quite the same pattern. Since they existed at all, they have a kind of excuse for being known; and since they existed thus, they must thus be represented. Handled so candidly and so tolerantly, they become real and affecting. They may have worn disguises in life, but they no longer do so. They may have been, as seen by their acquaintances, rather trivial persons, but they have been made somehow important. The truth about them dignifies them.

Though unquestionably a great novelist, Dreiser has always been handicapped by his defects as an artist. He writes bunglingly and heavily. He piles detail upon de-

tail till the main outline is lost. His imagination is not trustworthy when it tries to penetrate the secrets of subtle people. He loves beauty, but he appreciates only a few aspects of it, and does not always know how to reveal them. Nevertheless, he has rendered an indispensable service to American literature. As the leader of his school, he has received the heaviest blows of his opponents and has thus saved his followers. The work which Crane and Norris died too young to carry out, Dreiser has carried out through stubborn, persistent years. If they, and Jack London, proved again that life may be studied by the novelist in the slums, in the wilderness, at sea, on the battle-field, he has proved that it may be studied in more daring places: in the conduct of men and women who, without leaving society, lead their own lives in the midst of it, and find that there is, provided the individual has desire or courage enough, an opportunity now and then to be first of all an individual and only incidentally a member of the human hive.

Tarkington 1869–

At the other extreme from Dreiser stands Booth Tarkington, also an Indianian, who has won the widest popular approval. This may be said to be due about equally to his ideas and to his art. His ideas, at least those which appear in his novels, are the ideas of the majority. He neither challenges nor disturbs complacent readers. If one of his heroes for a time, during an inexperienced youth, shows signs of wanting to be a hero or a poet or a saint, he is sure in the end to settle down and to be at most points like anybody else. This, for Tarkington, is the happy ending, as he shows in "The Turmoil" and "The Magnificent Ambersons." He accepts the world on something like its own terms. Many generations of men, he knows, have tried their best to learn how to live to the best advantage. They have found out that honesty and pru-

dence and decency and temperance are likely to lead to prosperity and happiness. To aim too high is to run the risk of disappointment. It is better to aim low and not be disappointed. For after all, there are many chances for illusion in dreams. At bottom most men and women are of a limited capacity. They imagine that they are not, and go about seeking some high career. But when they learn that they have been mistaken, they may wish they had chosen to be comfortable instead of great; and if they learn it soon enough, they reach for the comforts of conformity before the chance has gone by. This is the kind of story of which Mr. Tarkington never tires. He has told it, in one form or another, over and over even in the serious "Alice Adams" (1921), in which the heroine, having pathetically failed to win a rich husband, decides to go to work for her living. As most people suspect or fear individualism, they are pleased by novels which tell of the defeat of ambitious individualists. It must, indeed, be admitted that the individualism of Tarkington's characters is never in any sense genius. It is more or less the wild oats of some person of average intelligence and emotions.

Tarkington's art is more notable than his ideas. He has the knack of comedy. He observes the absurdities and follies of mankind and displays them with a swift, light touch. He can be, with about equal success, either romantic or satirical, though he is more frequently satirical. When he is satirizing a person or an age he picks up laughable details with an endless gusto. As if he were a little chary, however, of touching more serious themes, he has specialized in what he appears to consider the minor comedies of the young. That children and adolescents have something like the same concerns as adults he does not take into account. Since their loves and hates and rivalries and aspirations and frustrations do not

visibly move the world, which is administered by their elders, he sees such things as amusing only. Doubtless he would not observe them so closely if he were not sympathetic, but the use he makes of them in his stories is far from being sympathetic in all respects. In reporting the deeds and affectations of the heroes of "Penrod" (1914) and "Seventeen" (1916), Tarkington is really not interpreting them. He is winking over their heads at men or women who are able to smile with him at the ridiculous figures the youngsters cut. He sees in them not a life which is worth reporting for itself, but a parody of life, which arouses mirth because it seems so like and yet so unlike the adult life which it parodies. The genuine merit of these books does not lie, as is sometimes held, in their insight into childish souls. It lies in the vigor and humor with which the manikins are manipulated. Penrod finds all the types of mischief which a boy of his age can find; Baxter practises every affectation which a boy of his age can practise. Though both of them are viewed from without, they are viewed with an eye so accurate that they afford a continual delight. Tarkington extracts all the comedy which can be extracted from his materials without going beneath the surface, where, indeed, not all is comic.

Ade 1866– George Ade is still another native of Indiana who, while his fiction is of a special kind, must be dealt with in any treatment of recent fiction. During his early days a newspaper man in Chicago, he wrote amusing novels, and he later turned with temporary success to comic operas; but he struck his most distinctive note when he published "Fables in Slang" (1899), and he has continued in that vein ever since. Before him there had been, of course, many Americans who had tried to utter homely wisdom in homely language, but Ade invented, or at least applied, a new device. Taking

some moral maxim, he tells a story to illustrate it. Whereas Æsop, however, chose the most general kind of morals and illustrated them in the most simple and direct language, Ade chooses gay or cynical morals and illustrates them in broad slang. The moral itself does not interest him so much as the chance to give it flesh and blood, that is, to prove it by showing it in operation in the lives of more or less actual people. If he wants to say, in effect, that the shoemaker should stick to his last, he tells the story of two brothers, one of whom stayed on the farm and prospered, and the other of whom, having in mind to make a fortune more quickly, went to a neighboring town and never rose above a minor clerkship. The moral of this fable is "Drink Deep, or Cut Out the Pierian Spring Altogether." If Ade wants to hint that charity begins at home, he tells the story of a woman who meddled with the poor in her neighborhood and discovered to her horror that they were not grateful. The moral is "In Uplifting, Get Underneath." And so on, with scores of stories and hundreds of characters, he translates the wisdom of life into action and makes it amusing by the slang in which he discourses.

The fables bear much the relation to ordinary stories that caricatures bear to portraits. The names of the persons in them are deliberately grotesque. The actions are exaggerated. The plots are content merely to make some satiric point or other. That is, Ade thinks first of his general idea, and then invents characters and actions to fit it. But for all that they are laughably lifelike, as caricatures frequently are. Exaggerated themselves, they ridicule exaggeration in their heroes and heroines. Aspiration and affectation both seem absurd in these fables. Though their range of intellectual sympathies is modest, however, they cover a wide ground of knowledge. They are "minutely conversant with the ins and outs of

common households; with the wiles of maidens and their swains; with the ways of men with dogs and horses and motors and stenographers and customers and competitors, in the bleachers, on the golf links, at the poker table; with the ways of women with servants and pets and clergymen and house-cleaning and candy and cosmetics, in cotillions, on picnics, at bargain counters; with all the comic nooks of American life." And they are far from being complacent in their attitudes. They make fun of solemn and dull people who are forever reciting solemn and dull maxims, and believing them. With a certain healthy cynicism, they insist that things do not always turn out exactly as the copy-books predict. "Early to bed and early to rise," says the copy-book, "makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." "Early to bed and early to rise," says Ade, "and you will meet very few of our best people." One of his most notable fables, "The New Fable of Susan and the Daughter and the Grand-Daughter, and Then Something Really Grand," is a kind of comic history of American luxury, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. It does not condemn luxury in its various stages; it accepts them as amusing, and smiles at the successive generations that have practised them. And over the contemporary scene the fables, taken as a whole, spread their garment of satire with a bland impartiality. More thoroughly than do the works of any other recent writer, they caricature the age.

While the tales in such a later book as "Ade's Fables" (1914) are longer and more complex than those in "Fables in Slang," the method in all of them is essentially the same. It is merely that of a man telling a humorous story to illustrate a shrewd truth. The fables would be striking without the slang. Yet the slang gives the needed touch which drives them home. That the language has varied a little with the changes of comic speech

during the past quarter-century makes less difference than might be expected, for it is not altogether derived from reality. It is partly a creation. Ade has that sixth sense for language which is one of the marks of Americans. Like them, he enjoys words and phrases which seem to have been turned out to grass and to be kicking up their heels. Moreover, he goes a step beyond most of his compatriots; he outdoes a nation of slang-makers at their own game. Without using many new words, he uses new combinations of words. Telling about a family which had got ahead in the world he says: "The Goddess took her Mocha in the Feathers, and a Music Teacher came twice each week to bridge the awful chasm between Dorothy and Chopin. Dinner had been moved up to Milking Time." No ingrained American will fail at a glance to understand that the mother had her breakfast in bed, that the daughter had little gift for music, and that the household now dined later in the day than formerly. Such slang is a caricature of language, but the caricature, while less enduring than the classic, may be extraordinarily effective while it is preserved

Edith Wharton 1862–

That the literature of an age may exhibit very different qualities side by side is made clear when it is pointed out that George Ade has been the contemporary of Edith Wharton. If he has broadly satirized the average Hoosier, she has satirized, with exquisite irony, the fashionable New Yorker. The noisy smart set, indeed, has never interested her; she writes about the inner circles which are so remote from the approach of the vulgar that they are almost secrets to them. Within these circles a severe and uncompromising decorum is the rule of life and the price of success. The people there live in such intimate solidarity that no one of them may leave the established paths of conduct without outraging the others and thereby bring-

ing disaster on himself. Outsiders have little chance to enter, for the reason that the rules are known only to those already inside. Lily Bart in "The House of Mirth" (1905) has the advantage of belonging by birth to the golden region and of knowing all its customs, but she lacks a fortune. Given the opportunity to marry one, she hesitates because she does not love its possessor. This, in her circumstances, is a fatal weakness, and she gradually finds herself an exile with no hope of any return. Undine Spragg, in "The Custom of the Country" (1913), tries to force her way in with the aid of her beauty. It can purchase much, and she comes in sight of her goal, but she turns out to have that in her past which the inner circles will not forgive. Newland Archer and Ellen Olenska, in "The Age of Innocence" (1920), belong and remain within, but they do so only at an immense sacrifice of personal happiness and free action. In all this Mrs. Wharton does not specifically take sides. She has only set herself the task of portraying a very compact community in certain of its conflicts with its errant members.

Even when she leaves New York, as in her masterpiece, "Ethan Frome" (1911), she is still concerned with the same theme. Rural New England seems to her, a native of New York, a no less compact community than fashionable Manhattan. Moreover, to the code of manners which there exists is added in New England the compulsion of poverty, which binds its victims as even a code could not. Ethan Frome, whom life has cheated out of every opportunity for joy, finds an exquisite love blooming on his bleak hillside and for a time forgets his fate. But poverty holds him fast, refuses to let him escape from the deadly existence which he has been leading, and drives him, in a mad hour of rebellion, to try to commit suicide with the girl he loves. The outcome is something

more dreadful than the condition against which he rebelled. Himself crippled in the attempt at suicide, he is obliged henceforth to bear the presence in his house not only of the wife whom he never loved but of the girl whom he did and who is now a querulous wreck of her former charming self. Doubtless a more energetic man would have found some way out, despite his poverty, but the character of Ethan has been shaped by his environment. To bear is the only art he knows. And circumstances have conspired against him to make his burden infinitely heavy and yet to place upon him such a responsibility that he can do nothing to save himself and his fellow-victims. Not since Hawthorne has a novelist laid in New England the scene of any tragedy of such power and elevation as this. The book is so constructed as to reveal gradually, piece by piece, details which hint at the nature of the long catastrophe, and then suddenly to let its full extent be known. Many writers of New England stories during the last generation might have been glad to undertake this story, but most of them would have handled it as a tragic curiosity of rural life. Mrs. Wharton, acquainted with the great world, has lifted her theme to the mood and the dimensions of universal tragedy.

Tragedy, however, is not her sole concern. She has the gift of satire as well. Particularly in her short stories she throws the light of her irony into many corners where sentimentalism ordinarily flourishes. As she finds herself drawn to tales of conflict between the individual and his group, so she finds herself repelled by stupidity and affectation and muddy confusion of mind and purpose. She dislikes dingy and characterless lives. She does not dislike arrogance if it is well bred. Sometimes thought snobbish because of her preoccupation with the affairs of rich and cultured persons, she is neverthe-

less remarkably unpartizan in her irony. The short novel "The Spark" furnishes an example. Delane, the story runs, has all his life had in him a spark of humanity which most of his associates cannot equal. One of them learns that the quality is to be traced to Delane's contact during the Civil War with a certain attendant in a Washington hospital, "a sort of big backwoodsman." In the end it turns out that the backwoodsman was Walt Whitman, though Whitman, with delicate reticence, is never once mentioned by name. But when Delane is shown some of Whitman's poems, he completely fails to appreciate them, because his own poetical taste has been formed upon other models. Quiet irony could hardly go further than this. And yet it is approached, if not matched, many times in Mrs. Wharton's works. Being an ironist, she does not achieve the march or rush of rapid narrative, as she does not devote herself to the sturdy or burly or homely aspects of comedy. But in most of her books she keeps to a high level of satirical intelligence, and to sophisticated minds she is a delight.

Willa Cather 1876–

Though no less intelligent than Mrs. Wharton, Willa Cather is less interested in intelligent characters and more interested in the general run of mankind. Two native types, however, have especially taken hold of her imagination. One is the pioneer; one is the artist. Born in Virginia, she grew up among pioneer conditions in Nebraska, where heroic deeds were still being done. The pioneers in her books are for the most part unreflective creatures, driven by powerful inner forces which they do not comprehend. They are primitive and epic in their dispositions. And yet they do not outlast the circumstances in which they do their hardest tasks. By and by comes the end of the frontier. Its wild freedom is degraded by clumsy towns, prosperous vulgarity, a monotonous standardization. Of

the children of the pioneers Miss Cather finds herself concerned chiefly with those who are again pioneers, pioneers of art. Her artists, too, are active rather than reflective. They work much by themselves, contending with definite though ruthless obstacles and looking forward, if they win, to a freedom which cannot be achieved in the routine of crowded communities. Thea Kronborg, in "The Song of the Lark," is a Colorado village girl with the voice of a genius. Nobody in her village knows how to help her, and everybody mistakenly tries to reconcile her to a tame career. But she cannot be thus limited. She has a kind of hard pioneer integrity which compels her to escape toward her destiny, almost as a powerful animal shoulders its instinctive way through scratching underbrush to food and water. In her the old qualities are joined to the new. So are they in all Miss Cather's novels. She is interested in the passion for freedom, but not for the limp passion which whines for freedom in a stuffy corner. Her characters strike out and make their own ways, whether to the end that they may subdue the soil to usefulness or to the end that they may subdue ugliness to beauty.

Living, to Miss Cather, is an art in which men and women have to be, in some degree or other, pioneers and artists both. Marian Forrester in "A Lost Lady" (1923) practises her art badly. Exquisite by nature, she lives in a cramped community on the Nebraska plains, bound to an aging and invalid husband, surrounded by neighbors who none of them know how to value her and her capacities. In a somewhat earlier day she might have found an outlet for her energies in the labor of her hands; in a somewhat later day she might have found it easier to go elsewhere to a more diversified community; in her own day she stifles. Unable to live without love, and finding none worthy of her, she declines to lower planes,

as if she were not aware, or were aware too late, that no love at all is better than unworthy loves. She does not in the end come to any melodramatic downfall, but she is lost none the less, because she has drifted away on the tide of cheapness against which she was designed to struggle. She lacks the strength to be a pioneer and the conscience to be an artist. On the other hand, Ántonia Shimerda in "My Ántonia" (1918), has both these virtues. Her life, indeed, begins unpromisingly. Her childhood is full of hardships; she is tricked by a scoundrel lover. But adversity cannot destroy or dry up the well of her spirit. Without the ordinary instincts of self-preservation, a gentle and confiding woman in whose nature service to others is the first law, she has so deep and true a current of goodness that it extricates her from the dangers of mediocrity. Goodness, so often negative, in Ántonia is so positive a thing that it seems to bring vitality to all it touches. "She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races." Nor is Miss Cather content merely to say how profoundly good her heroine is. She somehow proves it by the effect which Ántonia has upon all who come near her. Her excellence lies in her essence. She has the courage to live genuinely, and is therefore a good artist as Marian Forrester is a bad one.

It will be noted that Miss Cather most frequently chooses women for her principal characters. This denies her the opportunity to deal often with the more violent kinds of adventure. But if the actions of her novels are not epic, the moods are likely to be. High emotion blows through her chief actors like a free, wholesome, if devastating wind. She herself has the energy to feel high emotion and the honesty to reproduce it. She has tasted the savor of abounding health; she has exulted in the sense of great distances, the rapture of the earth

rolling through space, the consciousness of past and future meeting in the present. At the same time, she does not let herself fall into vagueness or into the glorification of mere noise and bulk. Taste and intelligence hold her emotions in hand. The result is a combination of qualities to be discovered in few of her contemporaries. If she is not so powerful as some of them, she is more graceful; if she is not so dexterous as some of them, she is more full of generous life.

Hergesheimer 1880– The world of Joseph Hergesheimer has little to do with simple pioneers. It is a world of rich decorations and beautiful details. Its people ordinarily live in houses where many agreeable objects have accumulated, in societies where existence is governed by well-established codes. Hergesheimer has a tenderness for aristocratic or formal manners, believing that they sprang out of a feeling for order and distinction which is being lost in the rise of democratic ideas. Others may spend their time improving the world, but he desires only to create beauty in the place of chaos. He does not, however, desire to stop with piling beauty upon beauty. One side of his nature is attracted by elaborate luxury; the other side constantly warns him that the most lovely aspects of character and destiny are simple. He has consequently chosen to deal with scenes and periods which will give both sides of him free play. Now he lays his action in the Virginia of the eighteenth century, now in the Massachusetts of the early nineteenth century, now in his native Pennsylvania as it evolves through two hundred years, now in fashionable hotels, now in contemporary Cuba. Always he sets the stage with a minute attention to historical accuracy, and always he shows some character trying to cut a straight track through confusion. "Java Head" (1919) is typical. A Yankee captain in the first days of clipper ships

brings a Manchu woman home as his wife to Salem. The Salem of the time, its wharves and streets and houses, becomes under Hergesheimer's handling a picture which at first seems delicately finished. But after the arrival of Taou Yuen the picture turns to a mere background for the far more finished central figure. Her costumes are bewilderingly complex, her toilets an intricate ceremonial. A thousand years of civilization have borne fruit in her absolute decorum. She might appear to be a fine mechanical toy were it not for those intervals in which her tender, resolute spirit reveals itself by some unmistakable gesture of humanity. That courageous spirit and those bewildering ceremonials are equally the subject of the book; or rather, the clash between them is the subject.

Hergesheimer sometimes tends to make his women so decorative that they are hardly alive, but this is not the case with the heroine of "Linda Condon" (1919). She is as simple as she is exotic. Such loveliness as hers rouses in a poet the sense that it must inevitably perish, and in a novelist the sense that the conflict between her pride and her fate must be dramatic. Both as poet and as novelist Hergesheimer traces Linda's career. Lovely as a lyric, she is almost as insensible as a steel blade or a bright star. The marvel is that beauty so cold can provoke such emotions as it does. It does, however, provoke them. And eventually Linda discovers that when her beauty goes she will have left none of the generous affection which, had she herself given it through life, she might by this time have earned in quantities sufficient to compensate her for old age. Hergesheimer does not soften the blow when it comes. He even adds to Linda's agony the consciousness that she cannot feel her plight as more richly emotional natures might. But she has, at the last, her intimation of immortality. By

her unresponding beauty, she realizes, her sculptor lover has been lifted to a vision of beauty which may not belong to her as an individual, but which belongs to beautiful things in general. He has been made great through her. Without modeling her as a person, he has got at the secret of her charm and has reproduced it in his work.

The ending of the book is as typical of Hergesheimer's novels as is the plot. It ends upon what may seem a note of hopelessness. Life, the author seems to say, is a vain striving. The outcome is rarely what has been expected, and at best it is only the clear perception that hope has been thwarted. But for Hergesheimer it is apparently enough if that final perception is clear. The lucidity of the discovery is a triumph over the muddiness of existence. And existence is less muddy for every case that can be found of persons who have striven with all their might for some aim, whatever it was. In "The Three Black Pennys" (1917) he traces the line of a single family through several generations of iron-masters in Pennsylvania. The blood of the family thins and the energy dies out, but at least the banner of excellence has been held up. So in "Balisand" the hero, who has been a soldier under Washington, all the rest of his life hates the process of democratic leveling which goes on under Jefferson. An aristocrat to the bone, he prefers the standards of the past century. He lives and dies by them. Though to the eye of reason he may seem absurd, at least he has displayed the courage of consistency. Courage in the face of sure defeat is a thing which never fails to excite Hergesheimer's imagination.

In a democratic age it is perhaps strange that novels with this burden should have been widely popular. That they have been proves that any age likes stories of aspiration and conflict, even when the heroes are on the un-

popular side. Moreover, there is the rich beauty with which Hergesheimer adorns his dramatic struggles. At times, no doubt, this beauty is too ornate, nor is it always evenly distributed. But it is effective because it is full of vitality. It is the beauty of the actual world, the world of vigorous action, not of pale contemplation. The characters, advancing through their careers with a determined stride, are yet so sensitive to beauty that it plays a large part in all they do and feel. Beauty is therefore a part of the action itself, and has that fascination which is always the result of force in any of the elements of a work of art. Hergesheimer not only has considerable power of narrative, and a delicate taste in the manipulation of beauty, but he has both of them, often, at the same time. Even when he is dramatic to the point of melodrama or when he is interested in beauty to the point of lushness, he still keeps beauty and drama somehow associated.

Cabell 1879–

The special distinction of James Branch Cabell among all the American novelists of his time is that more than any other he has laid down for himself a large program and has thoroughly carried it out. He has even invented an imaginary medieval country called Poictesme in which his principal actions take place, has drawn a map of it, given it a folk-lore and a history, and populated it with characters who are the ancestors of all his other characters in England or America. Being himself formerly a genealogist, and living in Virginia, he has hit upon the scheme of carefully tracing the line of descent of his heroes and heroines from Manuel, Count of Poictesme, as far as to their Virginian descendants. And with this scheme he has fitted his central conception of human life. This is that life is a comedy perpetually reënacted. Every man is born, aspires, succeeds or fails (no matter which),

and dies. His son and his son's son and that son's son do the same thing over again, much as if some eternal comedian were playing the same rôle in the different costumes which might be the fashion in different ages. Cabell's fifteen books are thus, as he calls them, the Biography of Manuel, who will serve as well as any one to represent the eternal comedian. But if the Biography is a comedy, so is it a romance. Cabell has no particular desire to be elaborately realistic in any of his books, for that would be to lay more stress upon the details of some single costume than his general scheme warrants. In any case, it would be unnecessary, because the important matter is not the respect in which one story or character differs from another but the respect in which they are alike. As a romance, the Biography need not keep looking for new stories. Old ones are good enough, provided they are worthy. The aim of the romancer, as Cabell sees it, is to write perfectly of beautiful happenings.

He himself writes with virtual perfection about many happenings which are undoubtedly beautiful, but which do not always seem so to people of humane sentiments or of narrow views. His medieval characters, whose trade is commonly war, are often ruthless and cruel and bloody, esteeming the end rather than the means when there is a clash of interests. And all his characters are concerned rather with the beauty or ugliness of their behavior than with its goodness or badness. Over their sins Cabell is not greatly worried. He would rather see them up to some high-hearted mischief than sitting in a smug chimney-corner. He has written about a remarkable number of rogues, knowing that the race of man loves a rogue for the color of his achievements even when it condemns him for their consequences. The hero of "Jurgen" (1919) is a rogue if there ever was one. Being permitted by a devil to do precisely as he likes for a day,

Jurgen travels irresponsibly through space and time, having many amorous and satirical adventures, and so exhausting the possibilities of his freedom that he settles down with a positive relief to his ordinary occupations when his time is up. Yet the conclusion is not merely edifying. Whereas most moralists would like him to conclude that his humdrum life is better than his period of wild oats, Jurgen only concludes that he has not the courage or the strength to keep on enjoying himself forever. He still believes that the poetry of existence is more attractive than its prose, and he regrets that he cannot endure more poetry than he can. Cabell, by his evident sympathy with Jurgen, thus makes clear that he sides with most poets, and perhaps with most people in their secret hearts, in a preference for abundance and splendor of life as against austere rectitude. He is willing to follow beauty where it takes him.

Yet no one knows better than Cabell that beauty has its own austerity. The happenings which he finds most deserving of perfect language are the actions of chivalrous, gallant men in the face of heavy odds, above all when they win some great victory over themselves. Ironically believing that no man has too much courage, Cabell nevertheless celebrates courage. Ironically believing that fidelity by and by grows cold, Cabell nevertheless celebrates fidelity. In "Domnei" (1913), the simplest and loveliest of his longer tales, he celebrates both. There Perion and Melicent are separated by obstacles which they cannot control. Though the obstacles seem infinite, the lovers never once despair. Perfectly loyal not only to each other but to the idea of love, they see in it something divine against which they would commit blasphemy if they weakened. Not that they are seriously tempted to give up the quest. In all his battles Perion never wavers; in all her lonely waiting Melicent

never doubts. A love so perfect in time infects their world. Their enemies out of respect for such devotion surrender certain of their advantages, and Perion and Melicent are united, and seem to each other no less desirable for the long separation. Perhaps it was a kind of madness which had made them persist, but it was a madness which was a glory.

In a sense "Domnei" stands with Cabell's short stories more truly than with his novels, for it is lucid and unified as the novels not always are. He is, in some of them, occasionally difficult to follow. Chiefly this is because of his cryptic and allusive manner. He hints at things which he does not tell. He makes references which may be deceptive. He humorously jumbles geography and history and mythology without warning. "The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck" is full of laughing satire; "Figures of Earth" (1921) is full of allegory; "The High Place" (1923) turns out to have been most of it a dream; "The Cream of the Jest" keeps shifting its scene back and forth from a real world to an imaginary one. It is sometimes impossible to tell when Cabell is making fun of his characters and when he is making fun of his readers. His Poictesme at first glance seems very remote from any common experience. But whoever makes a little effort can find the way into Poictesme and will soon be able to find his way about in it, surely one of the most exquisite worlds in fiction, devoted to magnificent adventures, high speeches, memorable personages, in spacious, noble, harmonious landscapes. All is order and art. And whoever wonders how it is that such a world could have been planned and completed during a turbulent season can read in Cabell's "Beyond Life" and "Straws and Prayer-Books" a cogent account of the theories upon which Poictesme was founded. The theories, however, are of course less important than the bold

and deft-handed genius which invented Poictesme and keeps on peopling it.

Herrick 1868–

If Cabell has tacitly offered a criticism of American life by his instinct to escape from it into the world of the imagination, Robert Herrick has offered his criticism, which is unsparing and unfavorable, by remaining in the midst of his age and rigorously measuring it by austere codes of rectitude and intelligence. Born in Massachusetts, he has led the larger part of his career in Chicago, but he has laid the scenes of his novels in almost every section of the country, and so brings a general indictment against it. His "Memoirs of an American Citizen" (1905) is typical of his attitude. It follows a youth of good impulses through his rise and progress in the world of business and on to his election to the Senate. This is an ancient theme, and is always interesting, but Herrick does not merely repeat the old drama or point the old moral. His hero, instead of rising by the practice of all the approved virtues, wriggles upward by devious ways and sharp tricks, crushing competitors, diverting justice, and gradually buying his fortune at the price of his integrity. In the most modern accents, Herrick thus asks the eternal question whether the whole world is worth as much as a man's soul. His own implicit answer is that the world is not worth so much, for he values integrity in character above all things. And as he believes that opinion in the United States is not with him in this stand of his, he assails the loose thinking and easy complacency with which Americans at large accept their heroes, without judging them by any standards except those of success. Likewise he examines, in all his novels, the conventional notions regarding the American woman. He finds that she is generally praised for her grace and charm and culture; he finds also, however, that she is often a

parasite, sustained in her position by the slavery of hard-working fathers or husbands, and spoiled into thinking that she is entitled to such advantages without rendering any real service in return. Herrick's ideas about both American business and American women are summed up in what is probably his masterpiece, "Waste" (1924), a broad panorama of public and private life in the forty years ending in the disillusion which followed the late war. These were, he holds, forty years in the wilderness, a wandering without any guide but vague hopes and an arrival at nowhere. As might he expected, the book is full of irony without laughter, of anger without relief. Herrick lacks certain of the graces of fiction, but he writes with such power that he cannot be neglected in any account of the contemporary novel. As documents illustrative of the ways of thought and feeling which have prevailed in the twentieth century, his works are indispensable.

Sinclair 1878–

Accusations like Herrick's are brought by Upton Sinclair, who writes, however, with the special creed of the socialist as the basis of his argument. At first a poet, he was drawn from his native Maryland to Chicago to study the conditions of the workers in the packing-houses, and wrote "The Jungle" (1906). The book made a stir, because it claimed, as a later investigation proved, that meat, intended for millions of people all over the world, was being prepared under filthy conditions. But this was not the only fact which outraged Sinclair; equally horrible to him seemed the fact that the workers in the yards were compelled to live in a virtual slavery to their employers. Thanks to a kind of conspiracy among their masters, these workers could not help themselves; thanks to the weight of public unconcern they could get no help from popular opinion, which indeed saw their plight as some-

thing essential to the very structure of society. Against such a state of affairs Sinclair raised his voice. Moreover, he drew from it the general conclusion that the worker is everywhere at the mercy of the possessor, that labor and capital are naturally at war. Such a doctrine not only sent him in search of further evidences; it furnished him with a method which made all his later books exciting. In them the oppressed heroes are pitted against the villainous oppressors with the fury of melodrama. Stories like these are as full of adventure as the old chronicles of frontier warfare, and in addition are full of comment upon the actual circumstances in which men live in industrial communities. Nor has Sinclair confined himself to industrial conditions alone. He has ranged among his villains all those persons who out of some selfish interest or other wish to maintain any set of circumstances not founded upon simple justice to mankind in general. One by one his heroes and heroines try to make their way in the world and find it already in the hands of rich or learned or prejudiced or avaricious masters who will not share their possessions. Furthermore, the masters enter into conspiracies to protect themselves against the demands of justice. The hero is not only snubbed, but persecuted. If Sinclair's strength lies in the vigor of his belief in the rights of plain men, his weakness lies in his habit of scenting conspiracies on every side. He drives his argument so far as to vex or amuse those of his readers who are not of his opinions. He manages to be solemn in his bitterness. Once only has he been ironical, in his "100%" (1920), the record of a disgusting creature whose patriotism leads him to carry his actions beyond the bounds of human decency. But as a rule Sinclair is hampered by a zealous formula, even when he most vigorously upholds the cause of living

men against the dead hand of tradition and the hard hand of injustice.

Lewis 1885– The enormous popular success of "Main Street" in 1920 showed that a new spirit had arisen in America. In that book Sinclair Lewis, looking back from New York to the Minnesota in which he had been born, told an old story in an unfamiliar way. His heroine rebels, as many heroines had rebelled before her in fiction, against the dullness of her village. But whereas the usual story had represented such a rebellion as a sign of snobbery in the rebel, this story represented it as a sign of aspiration. Carol Kennicot is not, it is true, a genius; her protest, however, is for that reason the more significant. If so humble a person as she has made the discovery that dullness is a vice, not a virtue, many other persons must have made the same discovery. And the reception of the book proved that they had. Whatever the various motives which impelled millions to read the book, it could not have caused so great a sensation if it had not touched a theme which was already interesting. Throughout the country, the reception of the book proved, people had begun to resent the increasing tendency to standardize human beings as machines and machine products were standardized. They had begun to feel, no doubt dimly, that if it was wrong to expose the character to the contamination of vicious company, so it was wrong to expose the mind to the contamination of dull company. Instead of blaming Carol, they unexpectedly sided with her, or at least grew excited over her story. They suddenly showed themselves to be aware that there is a conflict between the free intelligence and the meaningless conventions which cramp its movements.

To the charge that Lewis was merely making sport of

village customs a reply followed in "Babbitt" (1922), which shifted the ground to a city of some size. In a sense, he had repeated his earlier story, in this record of a man who has always desired to be at every point as much like his fellows as he can be, but who catches disturbing glimpses of happiness and beauty and excellence not to be attained by those who give themselves too thoroughly to a routine existence. "Babbitt," however, goes deeper than "Main Street," for it traces the discontents of its protagonist to their roots, as the earlier book had not done. In the midst of his noisy efforts to conform, Babbitt perceives that he has never done the work he actually wants to do, that he is not even sure the work he does is worth doing, that he has been cheated out of joy in his personal life because he has not had the courage to insist upon taking his profounder instincts into account. He has lived upon the surface, as all purely conventional men and women do, and he has thereby lost hold of reality. In the end his discontent avails him little, but he has at least decided not to hold his children back from the paths of freedom if he can help it. Lewis, arraigning dullness as before, had also pointed the way to escape it. He had made unmistakable his conviction that happiness in the long run is to be achieved only by obedience to the genuine impulses of the individual, never by conformity to the outward habits of the mass of men.

Though Lewis's ideas are clear enough, they have, without much question, been effective only indirectly. His readers have often hardly noticed them because of the delight they were taking in his comic gifts. A natural mimic, he takes off a hundred absurd characters, reproducing their looks, gestures, speech, with amazing accuracy. He seems to have overheard all the average citizens of the republic, and to have made notes of their average conduct. He knows just how they will respond

to a given situation, just how they will behave when any topic comes up for discussion. He does not, indeed, leave them quite on their average level of speech, for he is a satirist, and he tends by little touches of exaggeration at every turn to lift the language of his characters up so that it may be noticed, if only for its eminence of dullness. What the men and women say in his books is what they would say if they had the knack of expressing themselves a little better than such persons actually have. As Lewis has observed human beings, so has he observed the background of their lives, their costumes, houses, schools, churches, clubs, amusements, politics, with a swift, remembering eye. He has reproduced the outward life of the Middle West as no other novelist of the century has done. Its inner life he reproduces less exactly, because as a satirist he is concerned with making certain points, not with setting forth the eternal drama of birth, love, hope, death, which is the basis of imaginative literature. Many readers who sympathize with him in his dislike of conventional ways of thought and action, still find themselves unable to keep up with him in his delight in exposing such conventions. His proofs of an indisputable thesis seem too numerous. Nevertheless, he rarely loses himself in his materials. He has that first of qualities in a novelist, narrative energy. His stories move rapidly and consecutively. With all his cleverness, he takes great pains with his plots, building them up with that scrupulous conscience which is, rather unexpectedly, no less characteristic of him than his satiric wit.

Anderson 1876–

Sherwood Anderson has little of Lewis's wit, but he too is in rebellion against what he thinks the standardized lives of Americans. Born in Ohio, he had little formal schooling, and drifted into business without any definite aim or consciousness of his gifts or desires. Gradually, however, there came

over him the conviction that he could no longer find any happiness in the kind of life which seemed to satisfy the majority of his fellows; he must at least try to be an artist, to create beauty, to grow and not conform. "A Story Teller's Story" (1924) is an avowed record of his career, but his earlier books most of them deal with a similar theme under one disguise or another. They keep telling how some ambitious, bewildered youth leaves his native village, makes his way elsewhere, and yet can arrive at no final conclusions as to the meaning of existence. Life seems to them, as it apparently seemed to Anderson, a nightmare, wherein men troop back and forth and round and round, never coming to rest in any settled order, never feeling sure quite what they want or how to get it. By the aid of certain traits a man may emerge from the ruck, but he is then little better off than he was before, for he does not know what to do with the freedom which he has thus purchased. Instinct drives him toward excellence, but does not guide him. Anderson neither hates nor satirizes the world from which his characters are struggling to escape. He is mystified by it, and he broods over it with an intensity which gives his work its haunting tone. "Winesburg, Ohio" (1919) is typical. A young man, on the eve of his departure from the small town in which he has always lived, becomes aware of the drama stirring under the surface on every side. Because he partly hates to go, he views his neighbors with a good deal of tenderness; but because he is going, he has a sense of detachment which leads him to see them as cramped souls, repressed and distorted by the stern customs which have refused them any outlet for the forces working within them. Whereas Lewis's characters have a dusty complacence in their dullness, Anderson's have within them all a ferment which will not let them be at peace.

The difference is that Anderson is more a poet than Lewis is, and credits his characters with something of his own fire. This appears clearly in "A Story Teller's Story," in which the author is himself the hero, but in which he is the sort of hero he has regularly written about. Perhaps there are as many elements of fiction in his autobiography as there are elements of autobiography in his fiction; in any case, his life as here recorded turns out to be more interesting than any of his novels. And though he is bent upon giving the truth about himself as an individual, he incidentally helps to explain a certain recurring type of person which the age has produced in America. That person can no longer remain contented with the material prosperity which was for so long the chief boast of Americans and which contented them at large. He feels that, the goal of comfort having been reached, the nation should now look ahead to intellectual and spiritual triumphs. Instead, he believes that it has slowed its march, has grown fat with overfeeding, and has ceased to aspire. A nation cradled in revolution has given itself to a deaf fundamentalism and a blind patriotism. Resisting change, it does its best to suppress every one who counsels the pursuit of new aims. Thus suppressed, such censors of the age no doubt tend to dream wild dreams. Anderson has all his life, by the testimony of "A Story Teller's Story," hardly known how to distinguish between fact and vision. But there can be no question that he, like others of his type, has been engaged throughout in the search for the path which leads to goodness and excellence. To be dead-alive, they feel, is not enough. They long to be full of vitality, richly sensitive to beauty and heroism. They have the ruthlessness of saints, turning their backs on the world, and condemning it for its sloth and self-indulgence.

This aspect of Anderson has been generally overlooked, for the reason that he seems unconcerned whether his characters are temperate or industrious or devout, and greatly concerned whether they are natural or intelligent or magnanimous. He deserves to have it pointed out, however, that the virtues upon which he lays stress are the virtues which have always primarily interested the great moralists. And, indeed, he is a moralist as well as an artist. He cannot easily forgive his characters for compromising with circumstances. He regards it as a tragedy when a being capable of high deeds or emotions lets himself be overpowered by mere prudence. It is better, Anderson holds, to be genuine, no matter what it costs, than to keep the advantages of conformity. If some of his characters seem fanatical, it is due to his austere passion for intellectual honesty. But he does not present them as naked abstractions. He clothes them with warm flesh, and follows them through their careers with affectionate subtlety. The artist in him, that is to say, offsets the moralist, by sympathizing too delicately with each personage in a story to let him, as the moralist might let him, be nothing but a type. The subtlety, however, with which Anderson recounts the spiritual conflicts of his heroes, often makes them difficult to understand. Were he more subtle yet, or, perhaps, more artful, he might bring them closer to ordinary comprehension. As it is, they remain a little obscure, wrapped in brooding visions.

1920 The year of "Main Street" saw an outburst of fiction not to be compared in volume and reputation with any since that which had followed the war with Spain; but whereas that earlier episode had been characterized by historical romances, most of them concerned with glorifying the national past, this later episode was characterized by realistic novels, most of them ex-

amining the national present. The temper of the public had undergone a marked change. It settled down to peace in a mood which demanded more than patriotic or sentimental flattery. Strictly speaking, no doubt only a section of the public was affected; that, however, was the most intellectual section, and the best books of the new mode were directed at it. Zona Gale, long popular for her novels displaying the sweeter virtues of small communities in Wisconsin, produced in "Miss Lulu Bett" a terse, dramatic story of a village drudge who revolts against her menial position in the household of her silly, helpless sister and triumphantly carries out her revolt. Floyd Dell, of Illinois, in "Moon-Calf" produced a charming record of a youth who, with his eyes fixed on the stars, blunders out of his narrow surroundings to a wider world. Once he would have been regarded by American opinion as an unworthy hero, because of his disrespect for the ordinary conventions, but now he was forgiven because of his thoughtful aims and liked because of the integrity with which he persisted in his course. Everywhere it was felt that an old order had passed. Established sanctions had broken down, and authentic ones had not taken their place. In the meantime, it seemed, men and women were obliged to live their lives as independently and as courageously as possible. Fiction but reflected this new attitude, and a set of characters was created who won or lost in proportion as they dared or did not dare to rely upon their own instincts to guide them. The bounds of fiction were widened by the range of ideas it was thus permitted to suggest and by the discussion which it consequently aroused.

It must not be thought, of course, that the intellectual novelists occupied the field entirely. There still continued a stream of novels which had little use or merit except that they possibly entertained: novels sentimentalizing the

little virtues of domestic life; novels displaying adventurous deeds in remote scenes of action; novels assuring the public that all was still as it had been in the world, and that everything would indubitably turn out for the best; novels attracting attention to themselves by the spice of scandal which they contained; novels of a dainty sophistication which was quite detached from the larger current of existence; novels of no particular quality whatever. From these various categories might be chosen several novels which seem to call for analysis, were it not that they are either merely temporary phenomena or else too sporadic to find a place in a general history. How important the more critical novelists may seem in the future, it is yet too early to foretell. Time must furnish a perspective before any judgment can be rendered. For the present, however, they are important. They reveal the prevailing spirit as virtually no other books do. They seem to point forward to an increasing influence of literature in the United States, seem to say that a distinguished group of imaginative writers has begun to work a rich vein. And whether or not such prophecies are justified, these writers have already embodied the chief problems of their day with a force and art which cannot be neglected.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMA

AMERICAN literature has always been weakest in the department of drama. Whether this is because the drama has had too little public encouragement in the United States, or because the American mind does not naturally express itself in terms of conflict and climax, or because simply by accident no group of geniuses has been born within the influence of the American theater, is a question of no consequence just here. The fact remains that at least until the present generation there has been little dramatic work worth the serious attention of the historian, and few or no playwrights of deserved eminence. Not until 1890 did any arise of even respectable quality, and not until 1915 did genius enter the field. Between those years, indeed, flourished three playwrights, two of whom were efficient practitioners of social drama and melodrama as they were known in contemporary Europe, and one of whom promised, but only promised, to become a profound artist of the theater. During these twenty years, too, the prosperity of the theater in the United States became great; New York and its Broadway tradition dominated the national scene; hundreds of well-made plays held the boards for long or short periods. But seldom did any dramatist dig deep into American life; seldom was any contribution made by the theater to the more significant literature of the country. Theatrical psychology rarely rose above the level of that represented in England by Pinero and Jones. No Wilde or Shaw or

Galsworthy or Barrie offered himself as a relief from the prevailing shallowness and flatness.

Fitch 1865–1909

For a time Clyde Fitch, whose career coincides with the period under discussion, was hailed as a significant dramatist. But although he was immensely successful with his numerous plays, and was a master of the technic required in the work he set himself to do, he ceased to hold a high position when his plays no longer appeared, and after his death his reputation rapidly declined until it is impossible now to grant him any considerable worth as a maker of literature. In all the devices which work for theatrical effectiveness he was obviously proficient; in all the situations where maturity of emotion and strength of thought are things to be desired, he was ill-equipped. He was honest and earnest, and he had a sense of humor; but he had little or nothing to say.

Fitch began with "Beau Brummel," an adventure into history with the most famous of English dandies for its hero. Beau Brummel is treated with spirit and with a rather remarkable flair for social graces, although he is led to indulge in heroics at the close somewhat in the manner of Oscar Wilde's lesser heroes. Fitch was to write a number of historical or period plays before he ended his career, and none of them was to be a distinct improvement upon "Beau Brummel," which in certain respects has aged the least of all his pieces. "Nathan Hale" and "Barbara Frietchie," returning respectively to the Revolution and to the Civil War, are tragic in their conclusions and comparatively hollow in their rhetoric. Nathan Hale is supplied with a sweetheart, and he dies with the legendary words on his lips: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country!" Barbara Frietchie, who in Whittier's poem had been an old woman, was endowed by Fitch with youth and beauty in order to

make the part available for Julia Marlowe; the action was essentially stage-action, with love and honor contending for an artificial supremacy; and Barbara was made without much justification to die on the balcony where she was holding the Union flag aloft in defiance of the Confederate troops passing below.

Fitch produced many lighter plays which may be classed as farces; yet he continues interesting chiefly by virtue of the serious social dramas which constituted him a rival of Jones and Pinero in England. "The Climbers" exhibits two families in an American city, the Hunters and the Sterlings, at a time when financial difficulties test their characters. Richard Sterling, a young business man, the weakest of them all, is the person around whom the action of the piece develops. His integrity cannot stand the strain of poverty, and he commits suicide at the end after he has entangled the fortunes of many friends in his rash speculations. Honesty is never the theme of great drama; it is one of the easiest of the virtues, and writers of supreme spiritual endowment do not spend much time upon it. It is significant of Fitch's mind that he dealt with it again and again. "The Truth" (1907) concerns itself with Becky Warder's inveterate habit of fibbing when she is in uncomfortable circumstances. Such a habit is annoying to others, perhaps, and a definite blemish in one's character; but the tragedy, or the near tragedy, which Fitch builds around it in the present case fails to be impressive. The most fatal quality which a tragic theme can have is triviality. "The Girl with the Green Eyes" explores a more passionate and more fundamental sort of error—jealousy. Jinny Austin is able to conquer only after much agony of spirit her instinct to suspect her young husband of divided affections. Here again, however, the treatment is far from profound, and the issue never is elevated. "The City,"

to name another social drama, studies the consequences to the members of a provincial family of their removal to New York. The Rands, who were eminent and fairly respectable in Middleburg, disintegrate rapidly in the city toward which their ambitions have pulled them, and are saved from ruin only by the resolution of George Rand to reform his life and confess his sins as a politician and business man. The somewhat old-fashioned device of a campaign for the governorship is resorted to for theatrical excitement, and such excitement is abundant throughout. The play, however, fails to establish for Fitch the place which his champions have sought to make for him among the first of American dramatists.

Thomas 1857–

Augustus Thomas was an effective influence in the American theater at the same time that Clyde Fitch was dominating it. He began with sonorous melodrama, typified by two plays, "Alabama" and "Arizona," in which rather stale codes of honor are argued about and men are manly in the most obvious fashion—the fashion favored for good or for ill by the average theater audience. With the twentieth century Thomas advanced in sophistication and adroitness, but remained essentially commonplace in mind. "The Witching Hour" (1907) and "As a Man Thinks" are thoroughly competent dramas, rich in incident and interesting in their by-play; the themes by which they were intended to be subtilized, however, are unimportant morally and intellectually. In the first of the two much is made of telepathy; in the second, as its title indicates, much is made of spiritual healing—spiritual error is cured by taking thought. The errors which Thomas employs for the foundations of his dramas are at the best unreal errors. No great human issue is involved, and no strong light is thrown upon human motive. The way was still clear after Augustus Thomas for a playwright

who should contribute imagination and understanding to a barren stage.

Moody 1869–1910

There were those who believed that such expectations had been fulfilled when William Vaughn Moody, poet[1] and scholar, appeared with his play "The Great Divide" (1906). This was a study on a large scale and in intense terms of the conflict which in the course of nature arises when temperaments sprung from different civilizations come together. More concretely, it tells the story of Ruth Jordan and Stephen Ghent, the first representing the culture of New England, proud, scrupulous, and morally supersensitive; the second representing the culture of the Far West, rough and ready, and, though genuine, uncouth. The fundamental conflict of the drama is in the mind of Ruth, who, having in a moment of romance submitted to her abductor Stephen, eventually is unable to endure the thought that she is his primitive prize and escapes from his Rocky Mountain house into the East again. Upon his following her there, she is reconciled to him only when she is convinced that he has suffered for her sake and has looked into the depths of her conscience. The reputation of "The Great Divide" has somewhat declined with the passage of time; it is no longer considered an especially profound examination into the East and the West, and now that it is no longer played its unusual stage power cannot be felt. Yet it was an advance upon the drama of its day for the reason that it had a meaning and was written by a man of indubitable talent and culture. What Moody might have done in the following years is now only a matter of speculation. Before his early death he produced another play, "The Faith Healer," which was generally accepted as inferior to its predecessor. Its hero, Ulrich Michaelis, is possessed of the power of heal-

[1] For his poetry, see pages 11–13.

ing the lame and the sick by spiritual suggestion. Upon his coming into the presence of Rhoda Williams, the niece of a woman whom he has cured of paralysis, he at first fears that love for her will destroy his divine powers; but in the end he is brought to understand that such love only increases his gifts, and he faces a happy future with her who is to be his earthly wife. The danger here is that the audience will not be convinced, and it is true that "The Faith Healer" failed of great effect because the religious energy supposed to reside in Michaelis was not fully communicated by the action or the dialogue.

Moody was the author also of an uncompleted trilogy in verse dealing with the relations between the spirit of the God and the spirit of man. "The Fire-Bringer," based upon the old Greek legend of Prometheus, who attempted by the gift of fire to make man independent of God, is the first member of the trilogy. The second is "The Masque of Judgment," wherein it is made clear that God cannot afford to annihilate man because in so doing he would annihilate Himself. "The Death of Eve," a fragment, was intended to show God and man reconciled through the woman who had put them apart. The theme of the whole is the inseparableness of men from their deities and the utter dependence of deities upon the men who have created them. Moody appears here as the mystic that he prevailingly was, and in many passages as one of the most generously inspired poets of his day.

Mackaye 1875–

Early in the present century it became doubly evident that the American drama was in need of reform. European authors and producers were afire with new ideas, and were rapidly molding their theaters into new shapes; they were opening them to the best influences from the literature and the thought of the age. The American theater remained stuffy and

staid. Plays continued to drone their way through the proverbial three or four acts of melodrama or inconsequential farce. There was little connection between the stage and the best of contemporary life, until the pioneer work of Percy MacKaye began. The innovations for which he is most famous have to do with a dramatic form which he imported from European tradition and adapted to local conditions. This is the community masque, written for and produced by a civic theater. MacKaye early became convinced that the theater in America could afford to be more intimately allied with social forces, that the drama could easily be made to express the thought and emotion of a city or a nation, not merely of a commercial manager or a convention-ridden playwright. He set out to compose and direct gigantic masques which should be in every possible sense the expression of communities. Most notable of his ventures in this direction has been "Saint Louis," produced at St. Louis to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the city. Seventy-five hundred performers, young and old, played to half a million spectators in one of the city parks during five days; and the spirit of the multitude is said to have been all that MacKaye hoped it would be. He designed and produced in New York a masque in honor of Shakspere's tercentenary; one hundred and thirty-five thousand persons witnessed its ten performances. MacKaye's example has not been followed extensively throughout the country, and yet there are evidences here and there of a community interest in the drama such as only his work could have fostered. His zeal and enthusiasm have been remarkable, and his contribution to the American theater will doubtless seem more important in another generation.

MacKaye has also been a busy playwright in the more conventional theater. Few of his pieces have had a com-

mercial success, and most of them have been full of faults—undramatic construction, over-literary style, over-elaborated fancy. With all his idealism and his strength of purpose, he yet lacks upon most occasions that natural simplicity of utterance which makes for quick human appeal. Yet several of his plays have been rich in imagination; and some of them have been intensely national in flavor. "The Scarecrow" (1910) is perhaps the best known of these. It is called "a tragedy of the ludicrous," and it contains a characteristic profusion of fantastic, unconventional detail. The scene is seventeenth-century New England, and the machinery is furnished by ancient practices of witchcraft. The theme, which is never explicitly expressed, is an ethical one; but MacKaye has been chiefly interested in telling an excellent story and in rendering it interesting by the use of grotesque atmosphere. Witches create a manikin and introduce him into the society of their town. As he advances in his acquaintanceships, he is seized with the desire to be a man rather than a manikin. But upon each occasion of his looking into the witches' magic mirror he reveals himself a scarecrow, until at the end, desiring most of all the truth, he confesses what he is, and dies—according to the mirror—a man.

The New Theater

The second decade of the present century brought with it a veritable renaissance in American drama. The separation between literature and the stage, between art and the drama, tended to cease under the influence of many forces. Most of these forces emanated from abroad. Certain American producers and critics, traveling in England, Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, and Hungary, became aware of astonishing new possibilities in the dramatic form, and returned to write books or to produce plays which should embody their discoveries. It had long been

the custom to import French farces; now plays of greater consequence from other countries began to appear, and sophistication advanced rapidly not only among authors but among their audiences. The art of scene-painting and stage-setting was literally revolutionized within the space of a few years. Whereas the old formal four-act play had been content with conventional sets and stiff verisimilitudes, or in the better cases with a meticulous realism among the properties, now fancy, imagination, allegory, vision, and the profounder principles of esthetics operated to create new and fascinating worlds of canvas, metal, wood, and electricity. Two artists of the stage in particular, Lee Simonson and Robert Edmond Jones, demonstrated what could be done by trained minds working freely with unconventional materials. The theater had begun to be a place where art could thrive.

What was more important for the drama as literature, playwrights now became aware that there were fewer limits upon their minds than they had been taught to suppose. Bolder thinking was encouraged; a more honest realism was demanded; and when realism itself grew tiresome, fantasy or allegory found space in which to expand. In particular there was a liberalizing of technic. The nineteenth century had handed down a more or less rigid set of rules. There must be three or four acts, with three or four curtains; a theme must be developed plainly and directly within this mold; the dialogue was to be the natural dialogue of men and women; there must be no soliloquies, because in actual life men do not talk aloud to themselves; and there must be no asides, for it would be illogical to suppose that what the audience could hear at its distance a fellow-actor on the stage could not hear. These rules had made for a certain superficial likeness to life; they had not made for poetry, or philosophy, or essential likeness to the immemorial elements in human

nature. One by one they tended to give way before methods borrowed more or less directly from Europe. Some of the new practices were ill-adapted to American psychology, were fads, and so died a quick death. Others survived, and still survive as elements in a new technic which is threatening to reform the whole art of writing plays. A term often rather loosely applied to this technic is "expressionism"—a term itself borrowed from European criticism. Expressionism, if it can be defined at all, means immediacy of communication; that is to say, it means that the playwright, having an idea or a mood to communicate, proceeds to express it not bluntly or didactically through the speeches of his characters but by inference and by image through selected scenes and situations which he hopes will powerfully suggest the mood or the idea to the audience. More specifically, expressionism affects the style of play-writing by its insistence on the right of the author to use as many scenes as he likes, and to leave these as incomplete as their nature demands; it encourages the symbolic touch. Thus it is not unusual in a modern American play to find ten or fifteen scenes, each suggesting a development in the action but never stating it. A return has been made not only to the best European practice of a generation but to the practice of all the great playwrights of history who have been conspicuously free to do what they liked—to the Elizabethans, for instance.

1915. All this implies the existence of audiences trained to novelty and experiment. Such audiences had been prepared by the institution known as the little theater, an institution which, likewise under the influence of Europe, multiplied itself in many forms throughout the United States. The little theater, or as it is sometimes called the institutional theater, was conceived in reaction against the commercial theater of

Broadway, dominated in most cases by men insensible to art and committed to the star system of acting. The management of the little theater was generally in the hands of a few devotees of dramatic art on its more serious side; the actors were frequently amateurs to begin with—and hence impressionable to novelty; the plays were likely to be plays for which there was no large popular demand, plays perhaps written by obscure authors who were more interested in excellence than in success. The little-theater movement was abortive in many cities of the country, either because of quixotic management or because of a frailty in the plays offered. But in New York at least three ventures attained a remarkable artistic success. Three little theaters were by chance opened in the same year, 1915. The Neighborhood Playhouse, the Washington Square Players, and the Provincetown Players are historically of great importance. They succeeded in maintaining themselves; they encouraged the writing and performing of intelligent plays; they experimented to admirable effect. The Neighborhood Playhouse has continued to serve as a center of community amusement on the East Side. The Washington Square Players gave birth to the Theater Guild, which has had a brilliant career, chiefly with foreign plays of distinction. The Provincetown Players, commencing their work at Provincetown, Massachusetts, in a theater made out of an old building on a wharf, established themselves in a small room on Macdougal Street in New York and there did an invaluable service in introducing original playwrights of purely local origin—and in two cases of unprecedented imaginative power.

Susan Glaspell 1882–

The career of Susan Glaspell as a dramatist is closely bound up with the career of the Provincetown Players. Her first piece was performed in the Wharf Theater at Provincetown, and

when she published her first collection of plays, it was observed that all of the eight had appeared under the auspices of the company to which she had given her devotion both as author and as player. Her reputation was established by this volume. Most of the items included in it were one-act plays, after the fashion which the little theaters of the country, reacting against the dogmas of the older stage, had already set. They were conspicuously the work of an intelligent and passionate mind; when they were not gay with the feather touch of satire they were intense and concentrated in the quality of their examination into human—particularly feminine—motive. They were obviously the work of a woman, and most readers agreed that they were the product of a genius, if a narrow one.

"Trifles" (1917) is perhaps the best known of these shorter plays by Miss Glaspell. Briefly and sardonically it shows the accumulation of circumstantial evidence proving that a woman has killed her brutal husband, the crowning bit of evidence being a dead bird (her especial pet as all people knew), wrapped in silk and put away in her sewing-box. The husband, it seemed plain to the neighbor women who came with the sheriff to investigate, had wrung the bird's neck; and the wife had at last struck back. "The Outside" treats of another woman defeated by the circumstances of her life; but the circumstances are subtler. It is a psychological study, poetical no less than accurate, of one who, feeling within herself lives she cannot live, resolves to bury them somewhat as the sand at the sea-shore buries vegetation. So, half mad perhaps, she goes each day to the beach and assists the sand in its task, hoping thereby to further the analogous process within her soul. She is introduced into the play with words that have since come to seem characteristic of Miss Glaspell's most interesting women:

"One suspects in her that peculiar intensity of twisted things which grow in unfavoring places." Lighter but equally important plays are "The People," dealing with the humors of radical journalism; "Suppressed Desires," parodying the extremes of psychoanalysis; and "Tickless Time," playing with the obsession of a man and his wife who believe that clocks must give way to the more natural and truer contrivance, the sun-dial. The last two pieces were written in collaboration with George Cram Cook. "Bernice," a longer play, contains an ingenious analysis of a woman who has died before the beginning of the action, her character being reflected in the gestures and the speeches of her relatives and friends.

Two full-length plays followed these shorter ones. "Inheritors" (1921) was particularly ambitious, since it endeavored to tell the history of three generations of people in a Middle Western community, and incidentally to criticize certain elements in the society of the present day. The older Mortons and Fejeverays were sturdy sons of freedom, and Silas Morton in particular was moved by his vision of America to found a college on a hill which should at some future time express the best that was in America—that is to say, the freest. But the third generation, which fought the World War and subscribed to the prejudices and the intolerances engendered by that crisis, interpreted Americanism more narrowly. Madeline Morton, a granddaughter of Silas in whom his principles have survived intact, champions a few Hindus in the college who speak against British rule; and as the play ends a long prison-sentence awaits her because in the performance of what she considers her intellectual duty she has resisted the police. In "The Verge" (1922) Miss Glaspell returned to material more central to her nature, though not necessarily more central to her ideas, which have always been radical by the current definition of that

term. The heroine of this her greatest play is Claire Archer, whom her family believes to be on the verge of insanity, but who considers herself to be on the verge of sanity. A talented and highly strung woman, she becomes depressed by the monotony and meanness of life and endeavors to break through its bonds into the "outside"—a significant word always in Susan Glaspell—where life is absolutely new and real. The action of the play can scarcely be summarized in view of the fact that it is so rapid, nervous, intellectual, and extremely subtle. But it can be safely stated that human nature has seldom been subjected to a closer and more intensely imaginative scrutiny than it is here.

O'Neill 1888–

In Eugene O'Neill the American drama has unearthed its first indubitable genius of great scope. Within the space of a few years, and while he was yet a young man, he poured out in rapid succession dozens of strong and impressive plays, destroying the manuscripts of many which he did not like and preserving the best of the others in print. In fertility, in power, in variety, he has had no rival on the American stage; still young, he faces a future which most observers predict will be brilliant; fresh and pungent in all that he writes, he already has conquered Europe, where his plays are translated almost as soon as they appear in America, and where his contribution to the modern drama is seriously discussed.

Born in New York, O'Neill was early presented with experiences of value to a future playwright. He traveled with his father, who was a notable actor; went to college for a year; worked in New York at various jobs; learned to think for himself, and incidentally to think radically; prospected for gold in Honduras; read Joseph Conrad and shipped for South America; went on to Africa; returned to New York to a still more varied career as actor,

business clerk, and newspaper reporter; contracted tuberculosis and while he was recuperating took up the writing of plays; and after joining his forces with the Provincetown Players settled down to a busy life of authorship. His work so far bears the imprint of all this rough experience. The materials with which he deals are often elemental; he treats them frankly and completely; he is not afraid of violence, nor does he shrink from lurid contrasts. But what is more essential to an understanding of his success, he possesses a rich and bold imagination, and he reproduces human speech with an unexampled fidelity.

His first two volumes contained one-act plays of life in New York or upon the sea. "Thirst" was crude in most of its elements, but any careful reader might have seen in it the promise of a surprising and vigorous talent. "The Moon of the Caribbees" included six brief plays about sailors in southern waters, reveling in their uncouth utterances and striking to the depths of their wayward passions. "Beyond the Horizon" (1920), a full-length play which had a long run in Broadway theaters, first brought O'Neill to anything like popular attention. It is concerned with the lives of two brothers, one of whom, Robert Mayo, gives up his dream of exploring the world beyond the horizon which bounds his father's farm, and the other of whom, Andrew Mayo, leaves the farm where he naturally belongs to embrace the sea-career which had been planned for Robert. The maladjustments incidental to these errors of judgment make up the tragedy of the piece. The dialogue in many places is over-vivid, and the action borders on melodrama at times; but the play as a whole has the supreme quality of being absorbing; the characters, whatever they say or do, are important. "Anna Christie" (1922), O'Neill's next successful work, followed the fortunes in New York of Chris Christopher-

son, a Scandinavian-American seaman, and his daughter Anna. O'Neill here made use of experiences which he had along the waterfront, and the relations between Chris and his unhappy daughter he developed with great understanding mingled with deep sympathy. "Diff'rent" took for its theme the abnormal psychology of a woman starved for love. When Emma Crosby at forty-seven fell strangely in love with her worthless young nephew, Benny Rogers, she was called upon by her creator to act and speak in a way to strain the credulity of a theatrical audience; but that credulity is never snapped. Emma remains a pitiful figure through her squalid tragedy, and Benny takes his place as the first of O'Neill's characters to speak with a perfect and terrible naturalness. "The Straw" had for its setting a tuberculosis sanitarium such as O'Neill had known. In the love of two patients there, Eileen Carmody and Stephen Murray, the playwright reached to regions of suffering and passion which made many persons in his audience uncomfortable—so unaccustomed were they to passages as thoroughgoing and uncompromising as these.

With "The Emperor Jones" (1921) O'Neill struck out in a new direction. The play is expressionistic in form and spirit. In eight brief scenes the audience witnesses the swift disintegration of courage in the heart of Brutus Jones, a negro who has made himself emperor of an island in the West Indies. The natives have risen against him, and in unwonted haste he flees with his revolver toward the borders of his empire, hoping on the other side of some woods to find means of escape to the United States. Throughout the play the tom-tom of the angry natives beats with a sullen and maddening regularity. Throughout the eight scenes Jones finds his fright increasing, until at last in panic he is afflicted with visions of his own past and the past of his race, and

wastes his ultimate bullet upon a phantom which he sees under a tree only a few paces from the point he had originally left. He has walked in a circle, and his fate now awaits him at the hands of his bitterest enemies—his own people. The technic of the play was new and surprising; the atmosphere was rich and terrible. A new chapter in the history of American drama was written in a single evening. O'Neill soon followed "The Emperor Jones" with another and even more startling play in eight expressionistic scenes. "The Hairy Ape" (1922) is charged with criticism of modern society. Yank Smith, the vast, brutal hero of the piece, is a stoker on an ocean liner. The audience sees him at his work, heaving like some unheard-of beast and exhorting his mates to keep the pace that he has set them. It seems to him that he is at the center of life. His effort makes the ship move; he "belongs," whereas the silly passengers up on deck do not. "Every ting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I 'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I 'm de end! I 'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves!" But through a series of circumstances he loses his confidence in his own importance on the ship, and when New York is reached he sets out in a pathetic search for "the real ting." Inspired by his contempt for society to join the Industrial Workers of the World, he finds upon going to their headquarters that they are not the revolutionaries he has thought them; they do not belong either. He is thrown in jail, where he is christened the Hairy Ape by other prisoners. He is released, wanders about more and more lost in his mind, and finally lands at the zoo in front of the gorilla's cage. At least he will be at home here—he and the animal can "belong" together. He forces his way into the cage; the gorilla seizes him and crushes him

to death; he ends a mystified failure. The world means nothing. O'Neill was severely criticized by the contemporary press, not only for the ideas in "The Hairy Ape" but for the violent language in which they had been expressed. But the play had its effect; for those spectators who were without bias it was evident that a great writer was coming to his maturity; it was certain that the native drama would not be quite the same again.

In two later plays O'Neill has explored still further fields, furnishing additional data by which his view of life may be defined. "All God's Chillun Got Wings" is concerned with the theme of miscegenation, or marriage between two persons of different race. A white woman, rejected by her brutal white lover, marries a negro whom she has known since childhood. Her love for him, which flourishes under the ostracism the act brings upon her, is curiously mingled with a fear, only half understood within her own mind, lest he come to seem her equal. Actually a superior man, he is ambitious to become a lawyer, but fails at several bar examinations. She is both happy and unhappy over these failures, which progressively wreck him; until after the final one both husband and wife are reduced to a state of hysteria bordering on madness, and the play ends in frustration. In "Desire Under the Elms" the playwright returns in a measure to the material of "Beyond the Horizon." The scene is a New England farm, and the theme is the gradual disintegration of hope and strength in a family which too long has lived a sternly repressive, laborious, home-keeping life. All the industry and virtue in the world cannot save the old man who is the protagonist of the piece from an eventual despair which makes him shake his fist at God the ill-contriver and arch-blunderer.

O'Neill's view of life, it now seems clear, is of something which unaccountably frustrates the individual spirit.

The fault may lie in life itself, or it may lie in the insufficiency of given individuals; O'Neill as a playwright does not decide which, but proceeds to create dumb, tortured persons who come in the end to worse than naught. The business of criticism is not to say whether his reading of life is true, but to judge of his power within the limitations imposed upon him by his temperament. That power is undeniably great. Significantly enough, the pessimism which he has poured into the drama has had its counterpart in other literary forms. In recent American poetry Robinson has dealt chiefly with futile and baffled humanity, and Frost has shown that same humanity decayed and "queer"; in recent American fiction Dreiser has fashioned his men and women somewhat like inarticulate, suffering animals, and Cabell has invented his formulas of romance only to escape from a world which to him is ugly and indifferent. O'Neill, then, in bringing literature into the American drama has brought into it also the spirit of unflinching criticism which so patently distinguishes the work of the national imagination in this century.

CHAPTER IV

ESSAYISTS

A GENERAL introduction to the literature produced in the United States since 1890 must leave out of the account many writers who have set forth opinions or who have discussed topics which their age has thought important. Some of these writers, such as philosophers, historians, critics, have been too technical to be included among essayists at large; others, such as journalists, have been temporary or local in their concerns; others, such as reformers and crusaders, have expressed themselves without paying any heed to the graces of expression; still others, with all the graces, have simply had nothing memorable to say. The eminence of this or that man in public life may have led his words to be taken for more than they were worth. The degree to which another has dissented from prevailing modes of thought may have given him the look of a distinction which he does not really possess. Moreover, since any generation tends to listen more understandingly to its publicists than to its artists, and to forget them more speedily, the current value ascribed to a given writer does not bear trustworthily upon his chances for survival. It happens that the past three decades or so have seen the rapid development of opinion in the United States on almost every topic, and that consequently a very large number of essayists have been called into action to resist, mirror, or encourage the changes going on. Among these it is not only difficult to say which ones will continue to be interesting;

it is also difficult to say which, in the perspective of time, will turn out to have been typical. A few, however, may be chosen as unavoidable figures in an age crowded with candidates for the choice.

Muir 1838–1914

One of these unavoidable figures is that of a man who had little to say on the specific issues of his age and who was not even born in the United States. But no naturalist is ever untimely, since the background of nature against which men live changes so little that it furnishes a perennial standard by which to measure human change; and Americans in general have so newly come from Europe that a man born there may become as genuinely an American as if he were a native. John Muir, who came from Scotland, is almost certain in the long run to seem a more penetrating interpreter of nature in America than the native-bred John Burroughs. Muir was a creature of the natural world, and he took the continent for his home. From Wisconsin, where the family had settled, he tramped to Florida, and then went on to California. Up and down the long Pacific Coast, from Alaska to Mexico, he spent the rest of his life, writing his best books about the Sierra Nevada mountains. His Calvinistic upbringing and his university studies had done nothing to tame his restless spirit. Though part of the time he had a house to go to, he was most comfortable in the wilderness. A vast energy drove him. He went toward the things he wanted with the directness of an eagle. He no more suffered from the need of society than a bear. Alert as a fox, he was forever on the lookout for all that went on, and he managed to be present at the most unusual happenings out of doors. He knew how to fend for himself in dangerous situations. Willing to kill another animal if he needed it for food, he nevertheless lived at peace with animals and seems to have been accepted by them. At

the same time, he was a man, constantly drawing conclusions from his experiences, adding wisdom to his instincts, setting down, at intervals, the records of his adventures for others to read. What sustained him through all this was, apparently, more than curiosity; it was ecstasy. Eager as a child, he burned with the continuous excitement of an untiring poet.

Though Muir was not primarily a writer, and published little till late in life, it is of course through his books that he reveals whatever is known about him and the things he saw. "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" (1913), "A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf" (1916), "My First Summer in the Sierras" (1911), "Travels in Alaska" (1915), make up a more or less connected chronicle which is enlarged by other books not so clearly in the main line of his existence but hardly less personal. Taken together, they present an amazing variety of life. As botanist, zoölogist, geologist, Muir made important observations, but he was less a cool scientist than a seer hot upon the trail of the secrets of the earth. To accompany him is to put off the burdens of civilization and to go back to primitive conditions in which man lives in nature without feeling obliged to dominate or exploit it. Those conditions Muir describes in rich and picturesque detail. He seems to have studied every flower or tree or mountain-peak or waterfall or bird or beast till he was as familiar with it as with his own hand; yet his account never suffers from monotony, so brightly does it move and so vividly does it communicate its enthusiasm. When he brings human beings into his picture, he reports their appearance and their behavior with the same interest as he feels for the non-human citizens of his world. He is dramatic because he deals little with still life, and much with movement. Desiring to get a better knowledge than he has of the effects of wind upon a tree,

he climbs a spruce in a mountain gale. "Never before did I enjoy so noble an exhilaration of motion. The slender tops fairly flapped and swished in the passionate torrent, bending and swirling backward and forward, round and round, tracing indescribable combinations of vertical and horizontal curves, while I clung with muscles firm braced, like a bobolink on a reed." If this seems a characteristic thing for Muir to have done, so does his account of it seem characteristic of his writing. He has no dead levels of narrative or description. He is precise to the verge of wit, as in his note on the voice of the Douglas squirrel: "His musical, piney gossip is savory to the ear as balsam to the palate; and though he has not exactly the gift of song, some of his notes are sweet as those of a linnet—almost flute-like in softness; while others prick and tingle like thistles." More often, however, Muir strikes the note of rapture and so lifts himself above dullness. In any but a traveler of extraordinary fire and passion, this rapture could have become now and then mere sentimentalism. With Muir it never does. He takes his readers actually with him to his peaks, as when he says: "Come with me along the glaciers and see God making landscapes."

Howe 1854–

Another writer of the period, like Muir, was late in making his full influence felt, but not because he wrote of wild nature or wrote rapturously. Edgar Watson Howe has been the persistent upholder of the common life, the convinced defender of common sense against all idealisms. He began his career with a novel, "The Story of a Country Town" (1883), a full generation back. The powerful story of a prairie Othello, it incidentally accused the Kansas village in which its scene was laid of practising the vices of idleness and wastefulness and intemperance and stupidity, and this at a time when most rural novelists inclined to

the idyllic. Later, Howe made himself the apologist of the virtues of industry and frugality and temperance and contentment. These, of course, he does not regard as minor virtues, since they seem to him to be involved in the essential facts of human life. "Those facts are, in brief, that a man would rather live than die; that he keeps himself alive by work; that he works best when he is working for himself; that the best society is that in which the most men work best." Why, if these things are true, do men act as if they were ashamed to admit them and prefer to talk about the vaguer aspirations of the higher life? It seems to him hypocrisy or delusion. The evidences contradict such talk. "In theory," says Howe, "it is not respectable to be rich. In fact, poverty is a disgrace." He does not resent the way of the world in this regard. He judges the center of human existence to lie in the region of human necessities, such as food and clothing and shelter, and when he contends for them, and for the arts by which they are won, he believes he is contending for existence itself as against the superfluities which lie farther from the center. Somebody, he believes, should have the courage of his convictions and stand up for prudence, no matter what the idealists claim.

Such doctrines might make Howe blind to beauty and tenderness and heroism if he were less humane. As it is, they do little more than make him wittily sensible, within his range, in his comments upon the behavior of mankind. "The Anthology of Another Town" (1920), which at once continues the subject of his own first book and answers Edgar Lee Masters's "Spoon River Anthology," may be said to belong to fiction rather than to comment. Its stories of men and women, however, are told hardly so much for themselves as for the ideas they illustrate. Howe is simply a wise observer letting his

memory run through the history of the town and proving that life can be simple, that people do not need to be tortured with complicated problems. With humor and irony, he strips away the mists in which so many human actions and motives are wrapped. He has misled some of his readers by declaring that "provincialism is the best thing in the world." He is less provincial than he sounds. Far from admiring narrow and hundrum persons, he is bored by them. He makes fun of them whenever he comes upon them. But above all things he hates windy generalizations. The way to arrive at some understanding of humanity, he hints, is not to look at it as it seems to be behaving at some remote point. It must be studied in the examples actually under the student's eye. Before learning about man, it is first essential to learn as much as possible about men.

Howe has contrived to irritate a great many readers who do not like to use their naked eyes as much as he does. Optimists take so little comfort from him that they charge him with being sour and harsh. A more accurate charge is that he has moved about, intellectually, within limits beyond which his imagination has not been sufficient to carry him. That, however, is true of all but the greatest minds. Howe's limits must be taken into account. He has lived in the tradition of the old-fashioned America, not in the tradition of a cosmopolitan culture. But within his limits, he is master, and he is so astute that persons of his disposition everywhere are likely to agree with him. Moreover, he has remarkable gifts in the art of making statements with edge and clarity. His "Ventures in Common Sense" (1919) is not a treatise, or even a group of essays, but a collection of aphorisms upon the homely qualities of life, all of them taken from the monthly magazine which he writes himself on his Kansas farm. Few men can write more

pungently than he does in such sentences as these: "The people are always worsted in an election"; "The long and the short of it is, whoever catches the fool first is entitled to shear him"; "Poets are prophets whose prophesying never comes true"; "A loafer never works except when there is a fire; then he will carry out more furniture than anybody"; "With women, men are the enemy; I suppose they abuse them as a nation abuses a people with whom it is at war, with old stories told in other wars"; "There are no mysteries. Where does the wind come from? It does n't matter: we know the habits of the wind after it arrives." Wisdom as hard and sharp as this defies contradiction and resists time.

Adams 1838–1918

Neither a passion for external nature nor a loyalty to blunt prudence characterizes Henry Adams, but a boundless intellectual curiosity and a profound culture. Belonging to a family which has been, on the whole, the most eminent family in the United States, he was one of a group of three brothers who in the latter part of the nineteenth century set out to question the legends which had grown up about certain phases of the national past and who may be said to have initiated the period of self-criticism through which the country has been passing since then. As teacher, editor, novelist, and historian, Henry Adams felt that he had failed because he had had no considerable visible influence upon his age, and so settled down in Washington as a kind of anonymous adviser to statesmen. Not until the twentieth century did he publish the two works by which he is chiefly known and which are among the most impressive and distinguished of American books.

"Mont St. Michel and Chartres" (1904) and "The Education of Henry Adams" (1906), great as they are in themselves, were conceived by Adams only as parts of a still vaster work which, if any man could complete it,

would constitute a history of human energy. Adams had become more and more dissatisfied with the modern world as he saw it, and it is against the background of this dissatisfaction that his two masterpieces must be studied. This study will never be an easy thing, since to read them with full understanding is to be equipped with something like the same amount of culture and sophistication that Adams bore for his burden. But an acquaintance with them is indispensable to any one who would place himself in the center of intellectual problems to-day, and it has seemed impossible to leave them out of account in the present chapter; though they are immensely more than essays, being in fact both history and philosophy in a rather unusually formidable sense.

Adams's discontent with the generations through which he happened to live grew out of his failure—for which he did not blame himself—to discover any single meaning in their multiplex activities. As student, as diplomat, as traveler, as book-reviewer, as professor, as historian, as novelist, as philosopher, he had observed the world in more phases than most persons are permitted to observe it in, and the conviction had grown upon him that there was no formula by which it might be summed up; there was no purpose, no faith, no ideal, no illusion even, holding it together. At any given moment the life of man will seem complex and confusing enough to an imaginative man, and Adams was by no means the first of his kind in the history of thought. Indeed, his particular complaint is a common one to-day, as it was throughout the nineteenth century. But few men have been so profoundly concerned as Adams was, and few have pursued their researches into the infinite data of history with as much learning and patience and humor—for he was richly endowed with the faculty of irony. It happened that at Harvard he had been professor of medieval his-

tory, and it was in the course of his medieval studies that he became acutely aware of an age long past when society had been welded into an intellectual and emotional unity of the sort he would have liked to find informing his own age. This was the age of religious faith in Europe whose monument now is the series of beautiful and great cathedrals extending from England to Italy. Although Adams was in no orthodox way a religious man himself, he yet was in tendency a mystic, and his mind leaped at once to embrace a time when so far as he could see all men thought and felt alike. He decided, then, to write two books, one on the age of faith and one on the age of unfaith, which should serve as points to mark the direction which future history, either his own or somebody else's, would have to take.

"Mont St. Michel and Chartres" took its name from two cathedrals in France which Adams, quite characteristically, selected as symbols of the century which produced them. The book, however, is more than a description of two buildings—though among other things it is that. It is in effect an examination into the soul of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as it expressed itself in architecture, art, literature, and theology. And it is a glorification in particular of a civilization which could attain an "intensity of conviction never again reached by any passion, whether of religion, of loyalty, of patriotism, or of wealth; perhaps never even paralleled by any single economic effort, except in war." Were it not, he says, that "the feebleness of our fancy is now congenital, organic, beyond stimulant or strychnine, and we shrink like sensitive-plants from the touch of a vision or spirit," we should have no difficulty in conceiving the Virgin, for instance, as what she was once, an object of worship. Not that Adams was asking for the artificial restoration of a dead faith; he simply was recording his perception

that over several centuries man—not through his own fault, either—had lost unity. As an impartial historian Adams was bound to conclude that unity had "turned itself into complexity, multiplicity, variety, and even contradiction. All experience, human and divine, assured man in the thirteenth century that the lines of the universe converged. How was he to know that these lines ran in every conceivable and inconceivable direction?"

In the "Education," under the guise of an autobiography, Adams offered a picture of the modern world across which the lines of life "ran in every conceivable and inconceivable direction." The book is profoundly pessimistic, and the pessimism is all the more impressive because the author seems to know so well what he is talking about. The subject-matter is always his own experience, but the implication is that this experience must be typical. Adams represents himself as seeking in politics, in society, in universities, and in the industrial world a clue to the meaning of contemporary existence, and never finding it. The politicians, both abroad in the embassies and at home in Washington, could not prove to his satisfaction that they knew what they were doing or why they were doing it; society was decidedly ill at ease under his scrutiny; in the universities the teaching of such a subject as history was chaotic; in the world of machines there was visible power—witness the great dynamos exhibited at Chicago and Paris—but power without direction or significance. In the end Adams could only despair; standing quietly to one side, he could only sketch the history of a vast decay the cause for which neither he nor any one else might understand. His life, passed in a questioning age, concluded with a question so large that it may never receive an answer so long as there are men concerned to consider it.

Santayana 1863–

The same period which produced Henry Adams produced George Santayana, who more systematically, if less picturesquely, studied the entire problem with which mankind is faced. At first a poet[1] and a critic of the arts, he later extended his inquiries. The world, he saw, was full of tumbled ideas about which no one could be sure that they were true, and of tangled instincts of which no one could be sure that they were authentic. Man seemed to be an animal who had raised himself a long way from his earlier status, but who still had in himself old passions and prejudices which had never been civilized. If he was to go further, he must review his course and learn in what directions and by what methods he had advanced. Santayana therefore undertook to write the epic of the human mind, from its first dim moments of independent consciousness to its eventual moments of pure, detached intelligence. He saw his epic as a kind of tragicomedy, through which man struggled against heavy odds and many defeats to what it was hoped would be a happy ending. This epic tragicomedy, which appeared in five volumes, is called as a whole "The Life of Reason" (1905), and is one of the memorable books of the age.

The book, though beautifully written, is difficult reading for most laymen, because Santayana had to take a great many things into account in his record. He could not make it a mere melodrama. However clearly he himself might see the thread of his plot, he could no more do justice to it by a simple poetic narrative than a botanist could do justice to a field of flowers by describing his sentiments about it without mentioning a single flower by name or distinguishing accurately among the odors and colors to be noted in it. A philosopher, like a botanist, has to be analytical and precise. Santayana had

[1] For his poetry, see pages 6–7.

consequently to make his work as exact as a treatise. At the same time, since he was dealing with matters about which the imagination must be drawn upon for some of the evidence, he was obliged to make his work, in a sense, a poem. The natural result has been that certain of the experts have found "The Life of Reason" too poetic for their taste, and certain of the amateurs have found it too scientific. This is regrettable, for the outline of history which the book presents is profound, shrewd, stirring, and lovely. Going back to the Greeks, and disregarding most of the systems of thought which have flourished since Aristotle, Santayana proceeds on the assumption that "everything ideal has a natural basis and everything natural an ideal development." Human life, as he sees it, exhibits human nature in pursuit of ideal desires. By and during the pursuit the brute impulse toward reproduction is turned into tender love, blind industry is turned into creative art, tribal gregariousness is turned into enlightened society. This much he studies in his first two volumes, "Reason in Common Sense" and "Reason in Society." In "Reason in Religion," "Reason in Art," and "Reason in Science" he studies what he considers the three principal elements of the ideal life. Religion is the quest of good; art is the effort to embody beauty; science is the method by which the turmoil of facts is reduced to meaning.

Santayana has since protested that he never meant his epic to imply that the pursuit of the ideal is a constant element in mankind, and bound to prosper. He thought that some aspirations have been reasonable and some have been mad. Indeed, he wrote occasionally as if he were an ambassador to the American barbarians, sent from the Mediterranean to point out to them the tradition of Greek freedom and Roman pride and Catholic patience. Many American traits he did not like; to some he was blind.

Perhaps, however, a certain narrowness in his conception helped him to be more bold and positive than he would otherwise have been, and thus helped him to carry out his noble design without hesitating too long over the details. Undoubtedly he came after the World War to question whether the life of reason is not a much more sporadic thing than he had once believed, and to wonder whether he might not as well have called his book "The Romance of Wisdom." The new system of philosophy which he has begun to expound since the war takes into account many elemental instincts which he would once have dismissed as too remote from the reasonable to be included in his record.

It is almost certain that the American chapter of Santayana's career, signalized by "The Life of Reason," is closed, but it is still too early to estimate the work upon which he is now engaged. As a citizen of the world he has written some of the most penetrating and beautiful commentaries which have ever been written upon the United States. In "Soliloquies in England" (1923), the fruit of his residence in Oxford during the war, he has come nearer than elsewhere in his work to the concerns of daily life. Though he would like best to have been born in ancient Greece, he found in England a kind of modern compensation. "What I love in Greece and England is contentment in finitude, fair outward ways, manly perfection and simplicity." Greece failing him, he felt for a time in England able to live comfortably in the broad stream of the life of reason. Thus at ease, he turned his eyes upon the outward ways of the island and produced the charming book which first made the general public aware how eminent and witty an essayist he could be in his lighter hours. He who had been recognized as the best stylist among the philosophers turned out to be the best philosopher among the stylists. And his reputa-

tion steadily increases, now that he lives in Paris. America did not please him, and he cannot be called a representative of its national spirit; but in America he nevertheless became a poet and a philosopher.

The Younger Generation

The second decade of the twentieth century, which saw the beginnings of a new activity in poetry, fiction, and the drama, saw the rise of what has come to be known as the Younger Generation. The term has always been vaguely applied. No group has taken it as its official name, and yet something fairly definite is meant by it. Strictly speaking, of course, every new generation is younger than its predecessor, and is more or less in revolt against it. But the Younger Generation seemed to its elders to have a concerted policy of revolt. In a sense it did, though there had been no deliberate conspiracy. Ever since the end of the past century a numerous body of critics had been accusing the nation of arrogance and complacency, supineness and corruption, in public and in private life. So long as the elder generation, however, had the reins in its hand, it could claim that it was doing as much as could be done. The war, with its terrific disorder, served to discredit, in part unjustly, these who were in power. No one, even boys and girls perceived, could have done worse. Consequently they had a better excuse than ever for demanding that they be allowed a larger freedom. Perhaps they did not so much take this freedom as talk about it. The difference was considerably a difference in candor. At any rate, youth found a voice such as it had never had in the United States before. Rebellion began to be regarded not as wild oats but as heroism. Moreover, it was rationalized by persons of notable intelligence. In this the younger writers took the lead. There had actually been an interregnum in the national literature, presided over by remote or mediocre or timid

spirits who all of a sudden seemed hopelessly ineffectual. No wonder they were jostled aside by the more brilliant and outspoken poets and novelists and dramatists and essayists who succeeded them. These elders, and certain younger men and women who tend to side with them, have during the past dozen years or so been somewhat overlooked, in a measure because they have been so busy answering and censuring the Younger Generation that they have failed to furnish independent statements of their own position.

Bourne 1886–1918

Perhaps the first influential leader of the new movement was Randolph Bourne, whose "Youth and Life" (1913) raised a standard about which numerous followers rallied, disagreeing often in detail but agreeing in the main principle. Bourne, born in New Jersey, attracted national attention while he was still in college by the smooth maturity of his style and the challenging boldness of his ideas. He held that men get most of their ideas in their youth, that they feel most vividly and live most experimentally then, and that therefore youth ought not to be so dominated as it is by age, which may be merely presuming upon a greater quantity of experience, whereas only a finer quality could warrant such a domination. He saw youth as the creative ferment of life, as the element which pours into life the strength and courage by which it is enabled to move. Consistently with this, Bourne saw human existence as a sort of drama in which hopeful youth is pitted against cynical age. Being very young, he gave his sympathies unmistakably to youth's side; but he was too mature to be satisfied with the wild gestures of rebellion. He formed the conception of a league of youth, which should bring together into united effort the many impulses of discontent which he saw stirring all about him. That league, he hoped, would overcome inertia and eliminate

waste and waken aspiration and set originality free and increase diversity and in the end arrive at a more fruitful order of life.

In another age his doctrine might have been dismissed as utopian. As it was, the war in Europe gave an unanticipated emphasis to the program which he advanced. The old order was obviously breaking down. The question rose whether it would not have to be rebuilt by some such guild of the future as he had thought about. His premature death, and his unpopularity during the war which he never approved or excused, cost him much of the credit which he probably deserves. Others expounded his ideas and carried on his revolt. "Untimely Papers" (1919) and "The Evolution of a Literary Radical" (1920) were published posthumously. Already he is more or less a legend to many persons who have not even opened his books and do not know that they contain all the germs of the new spirit. But even a casual examination will prove that those germs are there. Touchingly prophetic, Bourne felt the coming struggle before it had become evident to less subtle observers. During his brief, vivid life he managed to utter some significant reflection upon almost every topic which vitally concerns the age. He wrote of religion, the state, property, the arts, education. This last especially interested him. He believed that education was the key to the great change which he guessed to be imminent. In particular, he was interested in American education, for though he was often abused as unpatriotic, he was full of that higher patriotism which leads a citizen of a country to insist upon talking about its ultimate good when the majority is too full of the country's immediate problems to take long views. Bourne studied the traditional culture of America with an acid scrutiny, but so did he look eagerly for all the signs that a fresh, genuine culture was rising

upon the ruins of the Americanized Europeanism which had prevailed in the United States ever since its colonial days. Uncompromising as he was in his scorn of whatever seemed to him dead, he was equally uncompromising in his demand that whatever seemed to him alive be allowed to live with as little hindrance as possible. The fragmentary nature of his surviving work should blind no one to the essential unity which it had as well as penetration and charm.

Mencken 1880–

Compared with Bourne, Henry Louis Mencken seems rough and violent. He is essentially a satirist, bent upon destroying cant and ridiculing stupidity and assailing dogmatism wherever he finds them. A native of Maryland, where he still lives, he has held himself not only outside of literary cliques but outside of the Anglo-Saxon traditions of Boston and New York, an uproarious Ishmael of letters. His early studies were in Shaw and Ibsen and Nietzsche, whom he labored to make more widely known in America. Like those men in their various countries, Mencken found life around him tame and sentimental, and he undertook to sting it into activity and sense. Being in several respects an excellent scholar, he worked for years upon a bulky treatise, "The American Language" (1919), in which he argued that the common speech of the United States is very different from the classic idiom inherited from England, and implied that American literature must consequently be as different from the English classics which it has often been satisfied to imitate. Primarily, however, Mencken has been a journalist, not saving up his utterances for systematic books but flinging them off in newspapers and magazines, keeping up a running commentary upon the news, and pointing a satiric finger at all the follies which have come within the range of his immense curiosity. With George Jean Nathan he has compiled

"The American Credo" (1920), which lists nearly a thousand vulgar beliefs which his countrymen, he maintains, generally hold. Above all, in the four series of his "Prejudices" (1919–1924) he has played the stream of his comedy upon the age with a variety and gusto unmatched among his contemporaries.

What first strikes the readers of Mencken is his seeming impudence. He dares, indeed he delights, to ridicule the most respected figures. He sees nothing sacred in presidents or bishops or magnates, but mercilessly makes game of them whenever they furnish him the opportunity by being pompous or affected or dull. Furthermore, he does not respect the common run of men any more than he does their leaders. He sees them as full of stupidity and, what is worse, full of pretenses. He bursts into laughter at the platitudes they like to hear, at the cheap books and plays and newspapers they enjoy, at the tawdry ritual of their clubs and societies, at their superstitions and their enthusiasms. The idea of democracy seems to him a dogma which can hardly be accepted by any enlightened mind. In the place of kings, he thinks, democracy has raised up demagogues; in the place of experts, it has raised up charlatans. For all demagogues and charlatans he reserves his most vigorous contempt. Above all things Mencken admires knowledge, expertness, courage, independence. When he sees these traits at a disadvantage in a community because the majority does not have them and is in fact afraid of them, he is filled with rage that true excellence should thus be submerged. Quantity does not make up to him for lack of quality. And if it irks him to see the race led by men who are not really superior, it irks him still more to see the superior members of society obliged to live unknown unless they are willing to pretend agreement with popular prejudices. He himself does not pretend. He speaks out continually in

behalf of excellence and intelligence. His disposition, however, inclines him away from tragic attitudes. He is a comic prophet. Instead of shedding philosophic tears over his age, he points an ironic finger and shouts with mirth.

It must not be forgotten that critics of much the same disposition have existed in every American generation, protesting against the tyranny of the majority and demanding that minorities be given a hearing. Mencken thus continues a line already established in the native tradition. Nor may it be forgotten that he is thoroughly American in his procedure. As Whitman sent his imagination out over the entire continent, over all its landscapes and over all its citizens going about their daily work, so Mencken sends his out in a fashion which is different only because Whitman was a rhapsodic poet and Mencken is a burly satirist. The one exulted to find so many of the rich materials of poetry, and the other exults to find so many of the rich materials of satire. In both the key is to be sought in the gusto which directs the impulse. Outside of America, it may be suspected, Mencken would be lost. He enjoys the spectacle of the swarming republic, and has never been tempted to escape from it to different lands. Moreover, he writes in the idiom of his country, not in the smooth international idiom employed by many of his bitterest antagonists. He is racy and daring; he indulges himself to the limit in the native habit of hilarious exaggeration; he is as definitely a product of American culture as Mark Twain. And in spite of the opponents whom he has aroused, he has rapidly increased in influence. Even those of his readers who do not at many points agree with him, take pleasure in the robust energy of his work. As a historian or as a critic of his age he leaves something to be desired; he lacks the habit of weighing con-

tradictory evidence in order to arrive at sober truth. But comedy has rights which may not be taken from it. Without it, institutions come to regard themselves too seriously, and habits of thinking and feeling settle into a slavish routine. Comedy by its irreverence brings them to judgment. Those things which cannot endure laughter generally deserve to perish. Those which can survive it, are generally better off for having been tested by its gay assaults. In any case, the existence of comedy is proof that the minds of men are not struggling for mere survival, but still have the superfluous strength which enables them to play lightly over the surface of their fates.

It is a sign of Mencken's vitality that he has forced a new alinement between the parties of opinion in American literature, compelling many writers to be known, to the public, largely by their position among his friends or among his foes. This is a distinction which should not be too clearly drawn, for he is himself an individualist, willing to visit his mirth or his censure upon any one who earns it, no matter what have been the previous relations between them. Also, among both those younger writers who might be expected to be Mencken's friends and those older writers who might be expected to be his foes, there are persons who stand squarely upon their own ground, without any reference to him whatever. If they are not here discussed, it is because they have confined themselves so largely to some special phase of literature, in particular to literary criticism, that they seem hardly to belong in a general discussion. They have talked about life at one remove, as represented in books, or as connected with them. Criticism, however, it should be noted, has played an important part in the American literature of the period, and has probably been more widely read than ever before. Not only in sober volumes

but in magazines, not only in magazines but in daily newspapers, it has been the occasion of a stream of admirable writing. With it has gone a rise in the art of popular biography. The whole field of American history is being freshly examined for striking figures about whom biographical essays might be written, often familiarly and ironically. Along with this department of literature must be mentioned another not so controversial. It consists of the autobiographies of Americans who, born in Europe or Asia, have narrated their adventures in finding a place for themselves in a new world. Though these immigrant books are hardly less specialized than literary criticism or philosophy or economic or political discussions, they have a great documentary value. They serve, in a way, to suggest the very first books produced in America, those narratives of the explorers who first ventured into the wilderness. Since then the making of books has become an enormous industry in the United States. Any contemporary account of the miscellaneous writings of a period must, like this one, deliberately leave untouched many writers who seem to demand attention, and some who in the future will by their absence from the account invalidate it for that day if not for the present.

PART TWO

ENGLISH LITERATURE

ENGLISH LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

POETRY

WITH the death of Tennyson in 1892 there passed a great generation of English poets whom it is the custom to call Victorian, because their careers were spanned by the reign of Queen Victoria. Their number included Browning and Rossetti, who already were dead, and Swinburne and Morris, who had ceased to write poetry. But these four were not so distinctly outlived in 1892 as Tennyson seemed in certain minds to be. The new generation of poets—the poets of the eighteen-nineties—were not so much inclined to reject the rugged realism of Browning, the estheticism of Rossetti, or the Greek and medieval programs of Swinburne and Morris as they were to turn their backs upon the purely English qualities of Tennyson. Tennyson, because his poetry for years had seemed an expression and a defense of comfortable, middle-class sentiment, was taken as the perfect type of the thing known for various reasons as Victorianism, and it was from his example that the younger poets consciously or unconsciously revolted.

The Eighteen-Nineties

The last decade of the century was marked by intense intellectual activity, not only in poetry but in art and philosophy. Many new reputations were made as it were overnight; the restlessness of the time was equaled only by its fertility and its originality. Most of the experiments in poetry, being alien to native tradition, were not popular in the sense that Tennyson had been popular. French ideas and forms

of verse were eagerly cultivated, and old-fashioned readers complained that no one was left to speak to or for them. The reproachful terms "decadent" and "fin-de-siècle" (end-of-the-century)—both derived from France—were hurled at the new generation by those who believed that the nineteenth century had already spent its force. It is true that no poet of Tennyson's dimensions had arisen to take his place. The phrase "minor poet" came properly into currency because there were so many versifiers of slight though real genius. Yet, looked at from this distance, the eighteen-nineties were by no means decadent in the sense that they betrayed a diminution of power. The typical spokesmen of the decade were sophisticated, exquisite, and perhaps affected, but they were strong in that they broke the ground for the poetry that was to come after them in all its vigor and variety.

Wilde 1856–1900

The name "decadent" was more specifically and perhaps more justly given to a group of effete and exotic poets who were bent upon destroying as swiftly and as insolently as they could the old proprieties which they considered hostile to the free spirit of their art. They set themselves resolutely against popular sentiment, determined to live their own lives and write only to please themselves. In the face of the contempt of a majority of English readers, they continued in their chosen course, and though their careers in some cases ended unhappily, they succeeded in writing poetry which by its beauty and intensity will long outlive the memory of their lives. Oscar Wilde, their most conspicuous member, was greater as a dramatist [1] and a wit than as a poet, but he is the most famous of the poets who embraced the doctrine of "art for art's sake" and seriously cultivated their own temperaments in disregard of what ordinary people might think or say; and he was

[1] For his plays, see pages 215–220.

the author of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," one of the best-known poems produced in his generation. Abhorring the simple and the natural, he urged his contemporaries to experiment with new sensations and to study art instead of nature. "Nature imitates Art far more than Art imitates Nature," he said. His ambition in the beginning was

> To drift with every passion till my soul
> Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,

and his poetry for the most part is the record of the adventures which his soul made in youth among strange, refined pleasures of the mind. But curiously enough his greatest poem is a simple and pathetic commentary upon human nature. A term of imprisonment which he served toward the close of his life was the inspiration for "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," in the true and unaffected stanzas of which he paid a touching tribute to a fellow-unfortunate.

> I never saw a man who looked
> With such a wistful eye
> Upon that little tent of blue
> Which prisoners call the sky,
> And at every drifting cloud that went
> With sails of silver by.

Dowson 1867–1900

Ernest Dowson, like the rest of the "decadents," spent the whole of his literary life in London, drinking bitterly of the experience which was to be had among the less fortunate inhabitants of that complex city. He derived his sophistication not so much from an esthetic creed as from his own poverty, disease, and dissipation, which, though they alternated with happier moments, finally prevailed and brought about his death. The total bulk of his poetry is small, and even of that only a small portion is now much read; but

this portion belongs with the most beautiful of all English verse. Dowson, perhaps because of the incessant pain which he bore, was a person of singularly clear spirit; and as an artist he was master not only of meter but of the plaintive note which he was so well prepared to sing. His masterpiece, "Cynara," expresses in perfect music the longing he felt for a return to a simpler and more innocent existence than that which the streets and cafés of London made possible. It might be taken as the cry of a whole generation who had suddenly thirsted for a new life but who had drunk too eagerly at the beginning.

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion. . . .

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

Phillips 1868–1915

Outside of any group stood the solitary figure of Stephen Phillips, a man with no intellectual war to wage but with a profound and passionate love of poetry to drive him on. His blank-verse plays and his poems moved many of his

contemporaries to prophesy that he would be another Tennyson, but his reputation has since declined somewhat into its true proportions. Two of his poems will last. "Christ in Hades" is a powerful vision of Jesus as he arrived in the pagan underworld and sorrowfully confronted the great spirits of the past. He walks before Prometheus, the Greek Titan who submitted to eternal punishment for the sake of man, and pities the human race which still is blind and cannot save itself. In the tender and beautiful "Marpessa," Phillips treated the old legend of a Greek maiden who was permitted to choose between the god Apollo and the mortal Idas. She chose Idas because of the very uncertainty and imperfection which his finite human nature would involve.

> But if I live with Idas, then we two
> On the low earth shall prosper hand in hand
> In odors of the open field, and live
> In peaceful noises of the farm, and watch
> The pastoral fields burned by the setting sun.
> And he shall give me passionate children, not
> Some radiant god that will despise me quite,
> But clambering limbs and little hearts that err,
> And I shall sleep beside him in the night,
> And fearful from some dream shall touch his hand
> Secure; or at some festival we two
> Will wander through the lighted city streets;
> And in the crowd I 'll take his arm and feel
> Him closer for the press. So shall we live.

Catholic Poets

Far removed from all the rest were two Roman Catholic poets, Francis Thompson and Alice Meynell, who continued a rare friendship as long as both of them were alive. Unlike as they were in temperament and expression, in intensity of religious experience they were equals. Thompson was always oppressed by poverty and disease, so that most

of his work was done in physical as well as intellectual misery. The finest of his simpler poems, "Daisy," closes with the stanza:

> Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
> That is not paid with moan;
> For we are born in other's pain,
> And perish in our own.

He wrote some songs of love and nature, but his most characteristic work was done in elaborate and mystical odes, the language of which, since it had so much that was difficult to express, is often very involved. "The Hound of Heaven" is his most magnificent ode, and it is already established as one of the English classics. In it he records his mystical experience with God, whom he represents as pursuing him forever until he submitted and became one with Him. The first stanza contains some of the mightiest lines in English poetry:

> I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
> I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
> I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
> Up vistaed hopes I sped;
> And shot, precipitated,
> Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
> From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
> But with unhurrying chase,
> And unperturbèd pace,
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
> They beat—and a Voice beat
> More instant than the Feet—
> "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

The career of Alice Meynell was more peaceful, and this peace is reflected in her singularly pure and perfect poems. In her best piece, "The Shepherdess," the chasteness of

her spirit and the delicacy of her art can most easily be studied:

> She walks—the lady of my delight—
> A shepherdess of sheep.
> Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
> She guards them from the steep;
> She feeds them on the fragrant height,
> And folds them in for sleep.

Kipling 1865–

While poets like these were exercising their brilliant though narrow talents, other and larger voices began to be heard from without. From far-away India as early as 1886 a young Englishman by the name of Rudyard Kipling had sent to London a volume of "Departmental Ditties," and that volume had taken the country by storm. In 1892 he sent "Barrack Room Ballads," which multiplied his vogue, and he continued for a decade to produce verse in great bulk which everybody now reads. Beyond any doubt he is the most popular of living English poets. No one else has written even one poem which all people know; Kipling has written a dozen.

The causes for his popularity are numerous. In the first place, he blew like a fresh and distant breeze upon a public which had had only refined and philosophical poetry to occupy itself with—poetry which demanded the subtlest faculties for its appreciation. This poetry had been the product of a highly experienced and rather weary age, and it was essentially aristocratic in tone. It concerned itself with artists and mystics, with precious and pessimistic souls. Kipling came along with his hardy, practical songs about common men and common deeds. He wrote a language which everybody used. He was not ashamed of slang; he liked to mention ugly, familiar objects. And whereas the poets at home had experimented with fine and difficult rhythms, he was content

with a bold mechanical singsong which could escape nobody. He was not over the average person's head, and he went with the current of everybody's blood.

Another reason for his immediate acceptance by the public was that he offered himself at a time when the spirit of imperialism was growing rapidly and many people were eager to know more about the Queen's dominions beyond the sea. Kipling, as the titles of his first two books indicate, came with tales of soldiers in foreign service, and by 1900 he had given complete expression to the martial temperament. He was proud to be writing of strong men for "a sheltered people." In "A Ballad of East and West," which begins with the famous lines,

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

he told of a colonel's son in India who gave chase to a native brigand with intent to slay him; but when at last the two confronted each other they were moved to admiration rather than hatred, and a reconciliation was quickly brought about. "Fuzzy-Wuzzy" and "Gunga Din" were tributes paid to two heathen soldiers in spite of the fact that one of them was an enemy and the other only a ragged water-carrier. And there were many other aspects of soldier life which Kipling could treat. There was the rough humor of the practical joke; and there was the melancholy of men who, content as they might be to serve the queen in India or Africa, often thought with stoic sorrow of their exile from home. In "The Broken

Men" Kipling spoke for those condemned exiles who for misconduct in England could never return; while in "Mandalay" he expressed the desire of a returned soldier to see the distant world again.

Even the spirit of imperialism, of which Kipling is often called the poet laureate, he presented on its darker as well as its brighter side. "The White Man's Burden" was a reminder that the business of controlling alien populations may be sad and difficult, and "Recessional," in 1897, was a powerful rebuke to those who took England's responsibilities as a guardian lightly, or who assumed too readily that supremacy must always be hers.

God of our fathers, known of old,
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
  The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
  An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
  On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
  Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
  Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

The final reason for Kipling's fame, outside of England as well as there, is that his sentiment and his "philosophy" make a broad and obvious appeal. Americans might not be capable of caring very much about England's part in the Indian Mutinies, the Boer War, or the World War—all of which Kipling celebrated—but they are only too ready to respond to a maudlin poem like "Mother o' Mine"; and the majority of people everywhere will agree with the opinions expressed in argumentative pieces like "The Conundrum of the Workshops," wherein the popular attitude toward art is defended. The severe critics say that Kipling is a vulgar poet who will cease to be read when the issues he treats are no longer important, and when the more superficial of current emotions are dead. This for the most part is true. Many lesser-known poets will outlive him because they are subtler and profounder. But he will continue to be read for a long time to come, and it will never be possible to deny his tremendous personal force.[1]

Housman 1859– In 1896, just ten years after the appearance of Kipling, another and very different poet appeared who was recognized at once as a classic. A. E. Housman's "A Shropshire Lad" contained only sixty-three short poems, and for twenty-six years the public had nothing else from his pen. In 1922, however, came forty-one "Last Poems" which followed the others as naturally as if all had been written together; and now that their author has offered his whole mind

[1] For his prose fiction, see pages 171–177.

to the world, he can be discussed as if he actually were a classic.

Housman is indeed as firmly established as he would be if his books had been written in Greece or Rome. His subjects are often the same melancholy ones that occupied the other poets of the eighteen-nineties—the shortness of life, the frailty of beauty, the cruelty of time—but he stands detached from his period because of his invariable excellence and because of the timelessness of his style. His poems also are pastorals—concerned with lanes and brooks and lads and lasses; while there is much unhappiness in his voice, it is a calm, clear voice, and there is no trace of the modern fret which is heard in the works of his metropolitan contemporaries. His landscape and his mood are universal, as those of the ancient Greek lyric poets were universal; and this is not altogether an accident in view of the fact that he is a classical scholar, a well-known professor at the University of Cambridge, most of whose time is spent in editing and examining the great literature of the past.

Housman's style is so light and sure, and his stanzas are so perfectly finished, that a reader is likely at first to miss the meaning and the passion behind them. There is a great deal of both meaning and passion. The poet's consciousness of the ravages which time makes in youth and love has brought an ache into his soul which does more than inspire a commonplace complaint. It is almost intolerable for him to think of the friends he once had, or the places he once dwelt in; but he must write about them because the memory of them presses upon him continually.

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

A good many of the poems are concerned with soldiers who have left their farms and gone off to be killed. But where Kipling was blustering and patriotic when he treated of soldiers, Housman is softly ironic. He knows only too well that the lives of his young men have been wasted, and the pity of this waste is strong throughout his work. Irony also compels him at times to tell the strict truth about battles. In one poem, for instance, he represents a fighter as keeping his position in the lines not because he is brave but because he knows he must die some time, and if he dies in battle he will have the best possible funeral at home. But the subtlest expression of Housman's pessimism comes in those poems which declare the futility of thought. If thought could make life better, it would be well; but it only confuses the thinker further.

Could man be drunk for ever
With liquor, love, or fights,
Lief should I rouse at morning
And lief lie down of nights.

But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts.

This is not gay, as may at first appear, but immensely bitter.

Housman has added to English literature a beautiful and classical note of elegy. He has also contributed a few ballads which hold their own with the famous established ones. Those who are acquainted with the old

British ballad called "The Wife of Usher's Well" will recognize a certain resemblance in the following, particularly in the last two stanzas, wherein the speaker runs over in his mind the familiar details of home which he is about to lose forever.

Farewell to barn and stack and tree,
  Farewell to Severn shore.
Terence, look your last at me,
  For I come home no more.

The sun burns on the half-mown hill,
  By now the blood is dried;
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still
  And my knife is in his side.

My mother thinks us long away;
  'T is time the field were mown.
She had two sons at rising day,
  To-night she 'll be alone.

And here 's a bloody hand to shake,
  And oh, man, here 's good-bye;
We 'll sweat no more on scythe and rake,
  My bloody hands and I.

I wish you strength to bring you pride,
  And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,
  At racing on the green.

Long for me the rick will wait,
  And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
  And dinner will be cold.

Even with that resemblance, the poem is original and great because it is the sincerest and most concentrated utterance of a rare, accomplished spirit.

Hardy 1840–

Almost at the end of the nineteenth century, one of its greatest novelists, and one of the greatest English novelists of all time, decided to abandon fiction for poetry. Thomas Hardy published his first volume of verse, "Wessex Poems," in 1898, when he was fifty-eight years old; and since that time he has published five others, all of them with characteristic titles: "Poems of the Past and Present," "Time's Laughingstocks," "Satires of Circumstance," "Moments of Vision," and "Late Lyrics and Earlier." These books, issuing from the West-of-England country which Hardy had made so famous by his Wessex novels, gradually awoke London and the world to the realization that he was the most distinguished of living English poets; and he retains that honor to-day. There can be little question that he is the profoundest and most interesting writer whom the present chapter is called upon to discuss.

Readers of his novels will understand why the titles of his poetical works may be called characteristic. "Wessex," "Past," "Circumstance," and "Vision" are fundamental words in Hardy's philosophy; they are the keys to his great temperament. The words "Wessex" and "Past" remind a reader how restricted Hardy is to a single and long-inhabited locality. He has chosen both in his novels and in his poems to confine his gaze to objects and people in one part of the world, because he has considered, and quite rightly for him, that human nature could most profitably be studied in the simplest and oldest terms, on ground which had been trod by many generations of men and women in only slightly different ways. Once he was invited to the United States, but declined for the reason that America did not seem to him to be old enough or to have suffered enough changes of human fate.

My ardors for emprize nigh lost
Since Life has bared its bones to me,
I shrink to seek a modern coast
Whose riper times have yet to be;
Where the new regions claim them free
From that long drip of human tears
Which peoples old in tragedy
Have left upon the centuried years.

For, wonning in these ancient lands,
Enchased and lettered as a tomb,
And scored with prints of perished hands,
And chronicled with dates of doom,
Though my own Being bear no bloom
I trace the lives such scenes enshrine,
Give past exemplars present room,
And their experience count as mine.

The word "Circumstance" calls up the whole structure of Hardy's philosophy, which is often called pessimistic, but which is more than that because it is based on a profound observation of life which penetrates beyond the point where life can be declared either good or bad. He has pondered long upon the fact that man is to some extent a misfit in the universe—that nature is neither able nor willing to grant him all of his desires, which have developed in him from a source which no one knows anything about. In one of his earliest poems, "Hap," he reflected upon the callousness of chance.

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily sown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

In "God-forgotten" he represents God as being quite unaware that the earth still exists at all.

I towered far, and lo! I stood within
The presence of the Lord Most High,
Sent thither by the sons of Earth, to win
Some answer to their cry.

—"The Earth, sayest thou? The Human race?
By me created? Sad its lot?
Nay: I have no remembrance of such a place:
Such world I fashioned not."—

—"O Lord, forgive me when I say
Thou spakest the word and made it all."—
"The Earth of men—let me bethink me. . . . Yea!
I dimly do recall

"Some tiny sphere I built long back
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)
So named. . . . It perished, surely—not a wrack
Remaining, or a sign?

"It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefor succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?"—
"Lord, it existeth still."—

And in many narrative poems, which incidentally take a place among the most successful in the language, Hardy shows human beings in the grip of relentless fortune, tricked and betrayed by indifferent Nature. "The Curate's Kindness," for example, is the story of an old man who was congratulating himself upon having been sent to a different part of the workhouse from that which

his wife would inhabit, but who by the well-intended meddling of a sentimental curate was assigned to quarters with her—whom he long had hated.

The word "Vision" is a word which Hardy has every right to use, for the eyes with which he looks at the world are the deepest of this generation—they are the eyes of the mind. In "Drummer Hodge" he sends his thought to the other side of the earth, where an English soldier, killed in the Boer War, sleeps this sleep:

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
  Uncoffined—just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
  That breaks the veldt around:
And foreign constellations west
  Each night above his mound.

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew—
  Fresh from his Wessex home—
The meaning of the broad Karoo,
  The Bush, the dusty loam,
And why uprose to nightly view
  Strange stars amid the gloam.

Yet portion of that unknown plain
  Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
  Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
  His stars eternally.

And in "The Fallow Deer at the Lonely House" he exhibits his singular power of realizing other eyes than his own.

One without looks in to-night
  Through the curtain-chink
From the sheet of glistening white;
One without looks in to-night
  As we sit and think
  By the fender-brink.

We do not discern those eyes
Watching in the snow;
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes
We do not discern those eyes
Wondering, aglow,
Fourfooted, tiptoe.

The mere fact that Hardy has a philosophy does not explain his power as a poet. He is so endowed by nature that his pages are thick with atmosphere, his lines are beautiful as well as understanding. His vocabulary is very rich with old and mysterious words, and his meter, while rugged, is always strong and expressive of more than merely words can say. His philosophy alone might have paralyzed his tongue, and made it seem useless to speak or write. As a matter of fact, his dramatic [1] and lyrical genius has driven him to create hundreds of immortal scenes and situations in which he could not have participated. His warm, full nature has compelled him even at times to sing joyful, reckless songs, to celebrate a happiness which he personally could not share.

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I 'll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and souls unknown,
I 'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

[1] For his dramatic work, see pages 242–247.

And some day hence, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

Bridges 1844–

One more English poet had made his reputation before the beginning of the twentieth century, and that was Robert Bridges, the present poet laureate. Like Hardy, he was already advanced in years when in the eighteen-nineties he collected and published several volumes of his "Shorter Poems." They proved him to be a graceful and genuine lyric poet, and he has continued to hold the respect of all the younger writers. But while he is an accomplished and serious workman, and an able student of the art of verse, he lacks anything like the profundity of Hardy, and he has little of the force which distinguishes the men who have since achieved prominence. A few of his gentle love-lyrics will survive as minor poetry, and devoted readers will not cease to praise the technical skill with which he has imitated the movements of external nature. Here, for instance, is the beginning of his excellent poem called "London Snow":

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down.

Noyes 1880–

The first decade of the present century saw comparatively few reputations made in poetry. There was no burst of utterance such as had occurred in the eighteen-nineties, or such as was to occur during the ten years between 1910 and 1920. Hardy and Kipling continued in prominence, but not many younger poets were appearing who could assure a future

for their art. There began to be heard a lament that this was an age of criticism and science only. A new birth was coming, however, and it was heralded by the intense activity of a younger poet named Alfred Noyes, who commenced to write as early as 1902, and who came into prominence several years before 1911, when the renaissance can be said to have properly begun. Noyes graduated from Oxford with the ambition—unusual for his generation—of devoting his entire time to good poetry and making a living by it. Poetry for years had tended to be a minor phase in the careers of most writers—either something to begin with, as in the case of Wilde, or something to end with, as in the case of Hardy. Noyes flung himself into his task with energy and enthusiasm, and succeeded to the extent that his profession became profitable and his product popular. He was not afraid to plan ambitious poems and finish them. In swift succession he published a volume of lyrics, an epic, a poetic drama, and a series of verse tales; and he has continued to keep before the public yearly with some new poem or collection of poems. Of late it is suspected that his inspiration wanes, for some of his volumes have been too thin to be distinguished, and he himself has inclined to turn too much to argument and propaganda, so that he has seemed to be more concerned with the questions of world peace and philosophical optimism than with his art. But in his time he has been a genuine force, and it must not be forgotten that he was one of the first in the present century after Kipling to awaken a large public to poetry.

Some of Noyes's longer works are excellent, though all of them are diffuse. His epic, "Drake," is a stirring narrative of Elizabethan sea-life, patriotic in purpose and eloquent in its blank verse. But it is somewhat marred by the presence of a sentimental love-story built

around the character of the hero of the Armada, Sir Francis Drake, and it is on the whole too loosely written ever to withstand the crumbling attacks of time. "Tales of the Mermaid Tavern" (1913) is the best of these long pieces. It is a group of stories constructed around the well-known legend of a tavern where the Elizabethan poets used to assemble for drink and conversation. Christopher Marlowe, Robert Green, Shakspere, Ben Jonson and the others figure picturesquely in the action, and there is much real poetry, though a great deal of reading must be done to find it.

As a lyric poet and as a writer of briefer narratives Noyes is perhaps most surely to be remembered. He is remarkably tuneful, being as skilful as any of his contemporaries in the use of long, musical lines and rapid, lilting stanzas. "Sherwood" begins thus:

Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake,
  Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again: all his merry thieves
Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
  Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

"The Highwayman" is the best known of his short narratives. It begins with a characteristic rush:

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
  Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door;

and it proceeds to its somewhat melodramatic end with a vigor and vividness that would be rare in any century.

Noyes has been the victim of his own facility, and he has fought a losing campaign in favor of old-fashioned optimism in a time of intelligent doubt; but at his most careful and inspired he is a true poet whom many people desiring something more beautiful than Kipling will long enjoy.

Masefield 1874–

Alfred Noyes had energy enough to precipitate a new movement in poetry, but he lacked the depth either of music or of mind that is to be found in genuine literary innovators. Those were furnished in greater degree by John Masefield, whose career is one of the most interesting of the century. Born in 1874, he was trained for a sea life while still a boy, and sailed to many parts of the world with no thought that he should ever be a writer. It was in America that he began to read the older English poetry and decided to emulate it. He has told the story himself in the preface to his "Collected Poems": "I did not begin to read poetry with passion and system until 1896. I was living then in Yonkers, N. Y. (at 8 Maple Street). Chaucer was the poet, and the *Parliament of Fowls* the poem, of my conversion. I read the *Parliament* all through one Sunday afternoon, with the feeling that I had been kept out of my inheritance and had then suddenly entered upon it, and had found it a new world of wonder and delight. I had never realized, until then, what poetry could be. After that Sunday afternoon, I read many poets (Chaucer, Keats, Shelley, Milton, and Shakespeare, more than others) and wrote many imitations of them. About a year later, when I was living in London, I wrote two or three of the verses now printed in *Salt Water Ballads*. For the next few years I wrote little. I wrote the rest of the verses in *Salt Water Ballads* in about six weeks, at Christmas time, 1901, in a London lodging." "Salt Water Ballads" was not the

volume which made him famous, although it is now much treasured by his admirers for a few admirable lyrics which it contains, such as the magical piece called "The West Wind," beginning

> It 's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
> I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
> For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,
> And April 's in the west wind, and daffodils.

The book which definitely marked his arrival, and which as much as any other single book brought on the modern revival of poetry in England, was "The Everlasting Mercy," written rapidly under great excitement in 1911 and published immediately in a magazine. It began on a brand-new note:

> From '41 to '51
> I was my folk's contrary son;
> I bit my father's hand right through
> And broke my mother's heart in two.
> I sometimes go without my dinner
> Now that I know the times I 've gi'n her;

and it sustained that note through a long narrative of the conversion of Saul Kane after his life of violent sin. In the bluntest and most realistic terms the reader is told of Saul's fighting and carousing at a public house until the entrance of Miss Bourne, a Quaker whose Christian spirit suddenly communicates itself to him and sweeps him into ecstasy:

> So up the road I wander slow
> Past where the snowdrops used to grow
> With celandines in early springs,
> Where rainbows were triumphant things
> And dew so bright and flowers so glad,
> Eternal joy to lass and lad.
> And past the lovely brook I paced,

The brook whose source I never traced,
The brook, the one of two which rise
In my green dream of Paradise,
In wells where heavenly buckets clink
To give God's wandering thirsty drink
By those clean cots of carven stone
Where the clear water sings alone.
Then down, past that white-blossomed pond,
And past the chestnut trees beyond,
And past the bridge the fishers knew,
Where yellow flag flowers once grew,
Where we 'd go gathering cops of clover,
In sunny June times long since over.
O clover-cops half white, half red,
O beauty from beyond the dead.
O blossom, key to earth and heaven,
O souls that Christ has new forgiven.

Readers were instantly stirred by this uncouth yet beautiful poem to a consciousness of the possibilities for real poetry that existed in modern life and modern speech. Here was a thrilling story told in rattling rhymes; here was the English language put to a fresh use. Masefield quickly followed "The Everlasting Mercy" with three other narratives equally good, "The Widow in the Bye Street," "Dauber," and "The Daffodil Fields." The first continued in a realistic vein, being the story of a young Shropshire man who was brought to destruction by a wicked woman; but with the second Masefield departed into a new field, the sea, and while he was still vulgar enough in places, he developed a power of description such as none of his contemporaries has yet equalled. "Dauber" describes the difficulties of a boy at sea who wanted chiefly to paint the water, but who was forced to work at the sails like the other men until during a storm he was knocked to the deck and killed. One stanza inspired by the storm will convey some notion of the deep music and the furious movement of the poem.

All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves.
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the sheaves,
Startles of water made the swing ports gush,
The sea was moaning and sighing and saying "Hush!"

"The Daffodil Fields" was almost too melodramatic in plot to be effective, but it again gave proof of Masefield's surpassing gift for lovely language; and it helped to consolidate his position as the most commanding of the younger English poets.

From 1913 to 1919 he composed little poetry other than a collection of distinguished philosophical sonnets and a number of fine, reflective poems of a personal nature. He returned to narrative poetry in 1919 with "Reynard the Fox," a story of a fox-hunt told from the point of view of the fox, and in many respects his most engaging work. After this came "Right Royal," a tale of horse-racing, and other narratives which cannot be described at length. It is on these longer poems that his reputation will probably rest, though his lyrics are of a rare quality and his sonnets are among the best of the century. His greatest achievements have been the revival of the honorable art of narrative poetry and the reinvigoration of a language that had begun to grow pale. In spite of his frequent roughness and superficiality, a reading of his pages will make it clear how forceful and moving he is, and how rightly he deserves to be ranked among the most ringing of English versifiers.

The Georgians

In 1912, a year after the publication of "The Everlasting Mercy," a collection of contemporary verse was published with the title "Georgian poetry: 1911–1912." Its purpose was to make better known the work of several poets whose

volumes had recently appeared, and its success was so great that two years later another collection was published. Five of these anthologies have now been given to the public, and they have done much to make good poetry popular. The word "Georgian" has come to have a meaning over and above the original one, which had simply to do with the fact that the poets concerned lived and wrote in the time of George V. "Georgian" is now the name of a specific group of writers, and it is believed to denote a definite quality. There may be some doubt as to the literal accuracy of this, for many different kinds of poetry have been represented in the various volumes of the series. At any rate, by "Georgian" is generally meant something not very different from "Caroline." The Caroline poets of the seventeenth century—Herbert, Herrick, Marvell, and others—are paralleled in many ways by the modern Georgians. Georgian verse is usually flawless in form. The poems are short, and often they are composed upon pastoral subjects, or upon love. Their prevailing temper is sweet and ingenuous, and their music is of the most delicate sort. Such poetry is far from being the only kind, or the best kind; but some of the loveliest of modern English verse has sprung from this source.

Davies 1870–

The best of the Georgians, and one of the best of living English poets, is William Henry Davies. Davies was a common laborer and a vagabond in America and elsewhere until in 1905 he settled down in London and wrote a slender volume of poems which he printed at his own expense and sent to various prominent authors for criticism. One copy came to Bernard Shaw, who later said that he had not read three lines before he knew he was reading real poetry. Davies has published many other slender volumes since that time, and in none of them perhaps is there a page

whereon one cannot find real poetry. The reason lies in Davies's very simple and honest soul, and in the extraordinary gift he has for describing the ordinary things he sees. He makes no claims to profoundity.

> I hear men say: "This Davies has no depth,
> He writes of birds, of staring cows and sheep,
> And throws no light on deep, eternal things—"
> And would they have me talking in my sleep?

He is content to look at the world with his own clear eyes, and if it only contains the usual number of birds and cows and trees and pretty women he must be happy. He of course does not render the world as most people see it. For him it is uncommonly definite and bright. He sharpens every object with his gaze.

> I look on Nature and my thoughts,
> Like nimble skaters, skim the land.
>
> Then—like a snail with horns outstretched—
> My senses feel the air around;
> There 's not a move escapes my eyes,
> My ears are cocked to every sound.

A falling star he once saw was more than a familiar star.

> It was a tear of pure delight
> Ran down the face of Heaven this happy night.

And he can make the most trivial things important by his method of mentioning them:

> Oft have I seen in fields the little birds
> Go in between the bullock's legs to eat;
> But what gives me most joy is when I see
> Snow on my doorstep, printed by their feet.

He suspects that most persons do not live to the best advantage because they never stop and simply look about them.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

He recalls that seventeenth-century master of verse, the Caroline Robert Herrick, when he praises the simple life, as he often does.

My walls outside must have some flowers,
  My walls inside must have some books;
A house that 's small; a garden large,
  And in it leafy nooks.

A little gold that 's sure each week;
  That comes not from my living kind,
But from a dead man in his grave,
  Who cannot change his mind.

A lovely wife, and gentle too;
  Contented that no eyes but mine
Can see her many charms, nor voice
  To call her beauty fine.

Where she would in that stone cage live,
  A self-made prisoner, with me;
While many a wild bird sang around,
  On gate, on bush, on tree.

And she sometimes to answer them,
  In her far sweeter voice than all;
Till birds, that loved to look on leaves,
  Will doat on a stone wall.

With this small house, this garden large,
This little gold, this lovely mate,
With health in body, peace at heart—
Show me a man more great.

But Davies is in no sense merely another Herrick. He is altogether Davies by virtue of the unique charm of his imagery and his versification. He can furnish the purest delight to his contemporaries out of none other than his own experience.

De La Mare 1873-

Walter De La Mare is often mentioned in company with Davies. He too is a fine and charming workman, but the impression he makes is fainter and more effaceable. He is most widely known for his children's verses, which have taken him into the nursery and in turn have taken the children into fairy-land. He has an older audience, however, in those who are captivated by such poems as "The Listeners." This brings a reader's mind to the edge of that mysterious other-world which De La Mare delights so much to let his mind play upon.

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor;
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,

That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

War Poets

The Boer War left little mark on English poetry outside the pages of Kipling and a few narrow patriots. But the World War, touching in one way or another the mind of every man, provoked many different kinds of utterance, and created not a few new reputations. The established poets, almost without an exception, expressed themselves in characteristic veins. Kipling celebrated the prowess of the British fleet; Hardy, Noyes, and Masefield, with varying degrees of insight, sang the pity of the slaughter. In addition, at least one new poet was born from the conflict, and now owes a firm position to it.

Brooke 1887–1915

Rupert Brooke had been one of the originators of the Georgian series; in the volume for 1911–1912 he had appeared as an exceedingly clever and spirited young poet, with a gay love of natural beauty and a promise of ability in satire. His name, however, did not make a wide impression until 1915, when the world suddenly was presented with a group of

sonnets which he had written upon entering the army, in whose service he died at Scyros. Immediately these sonnets were in all British and American newspapers and magazines, and the name of Rupert Brooke became the universal synonym for radiant, martyred youth. Perhaps it is still impossible to assign them their true value; there can be no doubt that they are superb expressions of a winning, spontaneous soul. In the following tribute to "The Dead," for instance, can be felt a joyful vigor which more than relieves the subject of its melancholy:

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
  Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
  And sunset, and the colors of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
  Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
  Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
  Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
  Unbroken glory, a withered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

Rupert Brooke at the beginning of the war sang with the enthusiasm of excited youth. Four years later, a group of disillusioned and bitter youths wrote satirical verse not only against the war in which they had fought but against all wars. Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfrid Owen aroused a wide and occasionally an indignant interest by their poems exposing the unmitigated horror and ennui of front-line life. Unfortunately their war-poems have not survived as poems, though they still are impressive as documents. Their resentment was perhaps too raw for permanent expression.

Radical Poetry

Contemporary England has seen less experimenting in new forms and materials of verse than contemporary America has seen, yet there has been a certain amount of this, particularly during the restless years that have followed the war. Even before the war there were Imagists in England—poets who wrote in free, unrhymed, irregular verse upon rare and often incomprehensible subjects. The chief of these was D. H. Lawrence, who is later in this volume to be discussed as a novelist.[1] It was not until 1916, however, that the new movement seriously began. In that year appeared an anthology of queer, wayward poetry called "Wheels," which shocked a public accustomed to traditional poetic themes and melodies. The authors of "Wheels" were so delighted at such a reception that they issued four other volumes in quick succession. The spirit of this new literature is iconoclastic. The poets are satirists with a vengeance, bent upon mocking conventional minds at every turn. The most gifted of them is Aldous Huxley, a brilliant, perverse young man whose two volumes of poetry have deservedly attracted great attention.[2] He is the most fitting representative of a satiric school which is likely to leave a deep mark on English poetry. At least he is the most fascinating spokesman of a generation disillusioned by war and intellectual confusion everywhere. In "Frascati's," a characteristic poem, he shows his contempt for the well-fed middle class which, as will later be seen, has been a target throughout the twentieth century for attacks from important dramatists and novelists.

> Bubble-breasted swells the dome
> Of this my spiritual home,
> From whose nave the chandelier,
> Frozen Scaffhausen, tumbles sheer.

[1] Pages 208–210.

[2] For his novels, see pages 210–211.

We in the round balcony sit,
Lean o'er and look into the pit
Where feed the human bears beneath,
Champing with their gilded teeth.
What negroid holiday makes free
With such priapic revelry?
What songs? What gongs? What nameless rites?
What gods like wooden stalagmites?
What reeking steam of kidney pie?
What blasts of Bantu melody?
Ragtime . . . but when the wearied band
Swoons to a waltz, I take her hand
And there we sit in blissful calm,
Quietly sweating palm to palm.

Alongside of Aldous Huxley, Hardy and Davies and Masefield will continue to sing their older, more beautiful strains. But the fact that these four are contemporaries is evidence that England to-day has found poetic voice for all the various things that it has to say.

CHAPTER II

PROSE FICTION

THE novel had held a high place in English literature for more than a hundred years before 1890, and it is easy to exaggerate the amount of change which took place about that time. The main outlines of the form had been traced in the eighteenth century; there had been much intensive cultivation during the nineteenth; and these two centuries bequeathed to the twentieth a heritage which it was difficult to improve upon. Besides this native tradition, however, there were certain foreign influences which considerably modified the English novel about the end of the nineteenth century. French fiction taught intensity and form, objectivity, and artistic control —qualities which English fiction had always needed. Russian fiction did not teach form to the English in any narrow sense, for by the strictest criterion it was formless; but it greatly enlarged the prevailing conceptions of the limits of the novel, and it explored vast sections of human nature hitherto unentered. English fiction profited by all these types, and in the light of them the more intelligent public demanded better writing. But the novel had so sound and rich a national history that much which was purely British remained unaltered. Throughout the period now under consideration Thomas Hardy, though his work as a novelist was nearly finished by 1890, and had been done in the native tradition, has generally been regarded as the greatest novelist of the age, particularly for the unity of his place, tone, and ideas.

Moore 1852–

There is no unity of place, tone, or ideas in the novels of George Moore. Their only unity lies in their excellence, for in their various ways they are all the work of a master story-teller and a master stylist who has never anchored himself in any portion of the world for long, but has drifted with the tide of his own irresponsible thoughts and chance desires. Born in Ireland, he was privately educated by well-to-do parents who when he was twenty permitted him to go to Paris for the finishing touches. He stayed there ten years, and completely surrendered to the fascination which French literature had for him. His work for a long time after his return showed the effects of this residence abroad, and even to-day some readers find his genius more Latin than English. Certainly no English writer has ever achieved the same quality of beauty as is to be found in his prose. He left a record of the ten years in a youthful book, "Confessions of a Young Man," which announced rather stridently his esthetic creed; he was to live purely for his art, subordinating fortune, fame, comfort, and morals if need be to the one thing worth serving, beauty. He lived in England until the opening of the new century, writing some of his most important books there; then in 1901 he suddenly discovered Ireland, and returned to associate himself with the leaders of what is called the Irish Renaissance. The attempt to repatriate himself was not altogether successful, as he showed in a long and mocking autobiography, "Hail and Farewell" (1911–1914), which made it clear once for all how little fit he was to embrace a nationality. After ten years he ceased to think of Ireland at all, and the remainder of his career has been devoted to producing lengthy and exquisite books in the various moods that have visited him.

The novels which Moore wrote in England after his

return from France were prevailingly realistic, after the French mode of Flaubert and Zola. They were entirely objective in their treatment of poverty, sin, and misery; some readers have found them callous, and have been outraged at the spectacle of a writer proceeding heartlessly to appropriate the unhappiness of others for the purposes of his art. Whatever Moore's inward thoughts may have been, it is certain that his art was excellent. He painted several pictures from life which will endure as long as literal truth is interesting.

"A Mummer's Wife," the first of these, is the story of a provincial woman who falls in love with a traveling actor and runs away with him. Her efforts to accommodate herself to the life of the troupe with which she goes from town to town are no sooner successful than she undergoes a series of misfortunes and begins a decline which in the end reduces her to the most sordid stages of hysteria and alcoholism. The lazy, obese lover who charms her and arouses her insane jealousy is presented in full detail, and the successive steps in her own downward progress are marked off with a superb craftsman's skill. Only "Esther Waters," published ten years later in 1894, is superior to this among all of Moore's early books. It in his masterpiece in realism, and indeed one of the best of English novels in any class. The heroine, a servant, may have been derived in idea from French fiction, but as she develops it is obvious that she comes straight from the life which Moore observed—he says in another connection, as a matter of fact, that conversations with his housekeeper furnished much of the material for Esther. The background of race-track life was also familiar to Moore at first hand, for he had been brought up in Ireland in the midst of much talk about betting on horses. The betrayal of Esther by her lover William, the birth of her child in London and her difficulties with it

there, her desolation until she finds a kind mistress, the reappearance of William and the marriage of the two under happy circumstances, William's illness and his resumption of his gambling habits and his death, and Esther's return to the country-house where she first served —all this happens with the utmost naturalness, so that the persons of the story, and particularly Esther, exist for the reader and elicit constant sympathy. The author himself, obeying his artistic creed, refrains at all times from expressing pity or moral disapproval. It all happened; therefore he puts it down. "Evelyn Innes" and "Sister Teresa" follow the career of a prima donna through her first success, her various loves, and finally her residence in a convent whither she has withdrawn for a period from the world. These two novels are done with authority, but the complex nature of the heroine renders objectivity of treatment difficult, and the whole is a little barren of result.

Moore's sojourn in Ireland bore fruit in a volume of short stories, "The Untilled Field," and a novel which he called "The Lake." He had gone back to his native island not only to study the people and to recall his own youth, but to get some ideas about the Catholic religion, which he suspected of having had a stultifying effect on Irish literature. "The Lake" is in a sense an expression of his final attitude toward religion. That attitude is skeptical with the skepticism of a disillusioned esthete who cannot take mystery seriously, but who is happy in a ceaseless search for beauty in any tradition. In other words, Moore is a pagan; he believes that this is the only world there is, and that it may be enjoyed most by persons of intellectual refinement and emancipated taste. The hero of "The Lake" is a young Irish priest who finds his soul not by renouncing the world but by accepting it—by falling in love. His concluding act is to dive into the

clear blue lake beside his church and swim to a new existence beyond the other shore. The lake, upon which Moore lavishes all the resources of his language, may do for a symbol of his mind—clear and thin and free from care—as well as of his style. A volume of frank and graceful stories purporting to be autobiographical, "Memoirs of My Dead Life," also belongs to this period.

Since Moore abandoned Ireland as a faith, he has produced three great books of fiction which differ very widely in theme. "The Brook Kerith" (1916) retells the story of Christ as Moore's unreligious eyes see it. He accepts an old legend to the effect that Jesus survived the cross, and shows him back in the peaceful shepherd life from which he had come to declare himself the Son of God. He now repents of that madness—for so it seems to him—and wishes to live the rest of his life in personal charity and philosophic calm. He has not the slightest desire to convert the world, and deprecates the ambition of Paul to go forth and harangue the world into worship of him. The flowing beauty of the writing did not prevent an outcry being raised from those readers who interpreted Christ's life differently. Moore had been attacked on many previous occasions for what was called his immorality, and this was the last straw. He announced that he would write henceforth only for men of letters; since 1916, accordingly, his books have appeared under the protection of a private imprint. "A Story-Teller's Holiday" is a collection of limpid and candid tales; "Abelard and Heloise" (1921) is a long rendering of the famous history of the medieval monk and the woman he loved.

Moore is very far from being a profound writer; he has contributed no ideas, and he cannot be said to have insight to a remarkable degree. In addition he is

capricious, arrogant, vain, diffuse, and often indecent. But he has the great merit of being able to write prose as fine as lace and as swift as water; he is one of the most charming story-tellers of modern times; he is one of the most accomplished writers in the English language.

Barrie 1860–

Sir James Matthew Barrie's career as a writer of fiction seems to have ended with the nineteenth century. Roughly since 1900 he has given all of his attention to the drama.[1] But the sketches and novels which he published before that year laid the foundation for his literary fame, and some of them make up the most important work of any kind that he has done. The scene of his best fiction is invariably Thrums—this name he gave to his native village—and its inspiration is the memory of younger days. "Auld Licht Idylls" and "A Window in Thrums" contain brief sketches of simple though interesting folk in their daily relationships and their occasional crises. "A Window in Thrums" has more unity than the other in that the scene is chiefly the sitting-room of a single family. The old mother, drawn from Barrie's own mother, sits in her window and watches the narrow world of Thrums. The various members of the family and the various characters of the village are brought in by one device or another, and as many of them are funny as are pathetic. Usually the two qualities come together. Much of the humor comes from the penury of the people; it is pitiful, but it is also amusing, to see their desperate efforts at making ends meet while they also strive to keep up a respectable front. They are filled with a quaint pride, and they are never without a fund of spiritual strength.

"The Little Minister" was Barrie's first novel to strike a large public favorably. Partly by its own vogue and partly because it has been skilfully dramatized by the

[1] For his plays, see pages 238–242.

author, it is to-day perhaps the best-known story that has to do with Thrums. The love of Gavin Dishart, the little minister, for Babbie, the pretty "Gipsy" who flitted into his sober life from a neighboring town, is treated in the vein of purest romance, as are the betrothal of Babbie to Lord Rintoul, the Gipsy marriage of Gavin and Babbie, and Rob Dow's sacrifice of his life in the flood at the end of the book. There is melodrama in many places, and an old-fashioned kind of stage-romance. But the story is excellent, and the people interesting.

Barrie struck deeper in the two novels which, taken together, comprise his masterpiece. The Thrums sketches were chiefly pathetic and picturesque. "The Little Minister" was chiefly exciting as plot, since the real identity of Babbie was not disclosed until late. But "Sentimental Tommy" (1896) and "Tommy and Grizel" (1900) deal with fundamental phases of human nature. The first takes the hero and heroine through childhood, and the second shows their mature love. Tommy begins his career in London, with his dying mother and his sister Elspeth. After the death of the mother the children are removed to Thrums, where Elspeth enters upon a devout and sisterly existence that rarely is interrupted by excitement or romance, and Tommy meets Grizel, the young daughter of a queer "painted lady" on the outskirts of the village. The rest of the history is concerned with the relations between these two very remarkable persons.

Tommy is called sentimental before it is known that the root of his human shortcomings lies in his being an artist. He is a born writer, but this means that he sees double—sees not only a world of people but sees this world with himself prominently in it. Never until his last day can he be sure that he feels anything unselfishly. Charming as he is, there is much of the pretender about him. He cannot resist indulging in what he knows to

be heroics, in doing and saying things simply for effect. He is never wholly convinced that he loves Grizel as much as he likes to think he does. In brief, he is not the single-souled man who ought to be the hero of a romantic novel. Grizel on the other hand is all that is implied in the words "single," "faithful," "passionate," and "proud." She becomes a profound woman, impatient at first with the sentimentality of the boy whom she loves in spite of her will to remain independent, and at last completely humble before him. This surrender of herself is more than Tommy can bear, since he understands it to be something deeper than his own feelings. His promise to marry her he cannot keep when the time comes for action, and there is a spell of intense pain for her while he retires to London. After more tragic passages he returns to find her out of her mind, and marries her in this condition. Upon her recovery the two live serenely together for a few years, until his death during a moment of infidelity. She continues in love of him forever, forgiving him all of his failures to be the man she would have liked him to be, and preferring to think that he had never been more than a gifted boy. "Tommy and Grizel," in which most of the action just described takes place, is poignant and true, and genuinely dignified by the tragedy which it so competently analyzes.

Kipling 1865–

Although Rudyard Kipling's fiction is undeniably of a higher order than his poetry,[1] the same difficulties stand in the way of a final judgment upon it. The difficulties are chiefly two, one having to do with the philosophy behind the work and the other having to do with questions of art. The philosophy is so agreeable to some critics and so disagreeable to others that practically all of them are blinded to the intrinsic merit of Kipling as a writer. The

[1] For his poems, see pages 137–140.

philosophy, or to be more accurate the attitude, of Kipling is generally conceived to be a brutal one, favoring hardness and force, contemptuous of the refinements of civilization, hating peace, extolling war, and recommending a discipline of life that includes all the experiences which in cant usage are called manly. The art of his stories also finds the critics in violent disagreement, for it likewise savors of hardness; it is called conceited, smart, smug, and cheaply knowing—the art merely of a glorified journalist, a supreme reporter.

The opinions of professional critics are in a sense irrelevant, since the lay public continues to delight in Kipling without reference to formal judgments. His books, it is believed, are read by more people both in and out of the English-speaking world than those of any other contemporary British author. Yet even these popular readers do not present a united front against the warring critics, for Kipling has developed many new sides of his character and his art since he began writing, and in consequence he has many audiences who in a manner never mingle and agree concerning his work as a whole. He has a separate audience of children, and he has audiences of adults who like variously his stories of military India, his stories of civilian and native India, his stories of the supernatural, his stories of England and America, his stories of occupations and machines, his stories of the spirit. Judged solely by the pleasure which he gives all these readers, he is the greatest living writer of fiction. If he is not that, a large number of critics could be found who would call him the greatest living writer of short stories.

There can be no question at any rate that his career has been one of the most brilliant in literary history. Born in Calcutta, he was taken to England when a child, educated there, and sent back to Lahore at seventeen,

to become famous throughout India before he was twenty. In two years more he was famous throughout the English-speaking world. He traveled around the globe, married an American woman, lived four years in Vermont, and then returned to England, where his subsequent life has been comparatively uneventful. He made a phenomenal reputation by twenty-five; he had done nine tenths of his best work by thirty-five; at forty-five he had to all appearances retired. There is now much speculation as to whether he will have another period of flowering, and as to whether—in the light of his capacity in the past to make new starts—the new flowering will be of an altogether different species from any that has come before.

His first volume of stories, "Plain Tales from the Hills" (1888), fascinated its English audience, as it had its Indian audience, by a remarkable freshness and crispness then unfelt in contemporary literature. It exploited a new subject-matter, Anglo-Indian life, and got much of its effect out of the spectacle of two entirely different civilizations mingling for a practical end in a distant and interesting place. There was no sentimentality about either the East or the West; there was no romanticizing of the native and no fatuous glorifying of the alien. It was clear that the author considered the British superior to the Indians, but he made them out on the whole to be a hard lot. He dealt with the simplest yet the strongest themes—love, death, dissipation, jealousy, sin, pride, and disease. He was terse, sardonic, and often cynical; he took always an indifferent observer's point of view. He sprinkled his pages with epigrams that astonished the reader by their sophistication. And more important yet for his success, he gave the impression of being a complete authority on the life that he described. It seemed, and subsequent books proved that it was true, that he had an indefinite number of stories yet to

tell, that these were only a sample, chosen out of a store too rich to measure. The next volume made a departure into rough humor which was immediately labeled American and considered to derive from Mark Twain or Bret Harte. "Soldiers Three" (1888) brought to birth Mulvaney the Irishman, Ortheris the cockney, and Learoyd the Yorkshireman. These three musketeers fought, drank, talked, swore, and laughed their way quickly into fame; they still are the foundation of their creator's popularity among all readers who are most attracted by his rougher surfaces. Other collections followed, sometimes at the rate of more than one a year, displaying Kipling invariably in new guises, but consistent with all that had gone before in the brilliance of their technic. As he gradually abandoned India for a wider world of people and things, he became more practised in the art of reporting. He had a boundless curiosity, an unquenchable thirst for facts; in a few weeks, or perhaps from a single conversation with one who knew, he could pick up enough details about a nation, a trade, a ship, a locomotive, or a school to make himself seem an authority. Also he carried over from his later Indian work a capacity for tenderness, so that he was able eventually to treat of subtler emotions, and even to suggest ideas beyond the ordinary range—to become an authentic mystic.

The most famous of all the short stories is "The Man Who Would be King." It is no less compact than elaborate; without the closest attention to each detail the reader becomes lost in the maze of adventures that befall the two heroes, Peachey Carnahan and Daniel Dravot. These rogues push into the interior of Asia and pass themselves off as rulers and gods to a remote tribe. But there is a mutiny at last, and the retribution visited upon the pretenders is as horrible as any of the horrible things in Kipling; Dravot is dropped to his death from a rope-

bridge overhanging a deep valley, and Carnahan, after torture by crucifixion, is sent stumbling home with his partner's head in his hands. It is a ghastly but engrossing tale, drawn against a thoroughly savage background and rendered credible through the energetic art of its author. "The Brushwood Boy," in many respects the most beautiful story from Kipling's hand, tells of a boy and a girl who in their separate parts of the world dreamed a twin-dream, and only upon meeting as lovers identified each other. Even a profounder love-story is "Without Benefit of Clergy," again with an Indian background—the story of John Holden's life with the native woman who bore him a son and who, after the child's death from fever, died in an epidemic of cholera declaring her belief in one God: John Holden. Kipling has treated of machines and builded things with still another kind of affection. ".007" is the story of a great locomotive on the night of its first thrilling run through strange space, and "The Ship That Found Herself" so far personifies a vessel as to describe the voice which she learned to use on her first voyage across the Atlantic.

Kipling from the start has been deeply interested in children. The two "Jungle Books" (1894–1895) scarcely need discussion, since they are almost universally read and enjoyed. Their boy-hero, Mowgli, reared in the jungle by wolves and acquainted at first hand with all the beasts—the elephant, the python, the monkey, the tiger, and the cobra—is learned in a kind of life which cannot but appeal at some time or other to every one. Kipling's imagination was never more cleverly in command of its material; for the time being the jungle-beasts are the only creatures that dwell on the earth. The "Just-So Stories" facetiously make plain to younger readers how the elephant got his trunk, how the rhinoceros got his wrinkled skin, and how the cat came to walk "by his lone"

at night. They are masterpieces in their vigor and invention; though the author occasionally breaks the rules of the game by smiling over the child's shoulder at an adult by-stander. "Stalky and Co." is a volume of school stories for older readers. It is Kipling's record of his own school-days in England, and its principal aim is to show the three heroes, Stalky, McTurk, and Beetle, as the unsentimental animals which Kipling believes all healthy boys are.

Of his novels, "The Light That Failed" is generally dismissed as a failure, although its account of an artist who went blind and lost the cold woman of his affections is given with the usual precision and strength of detail. The most valid criticism of it is that it is meaningless; nothing happens except that a man loses his sight and is cruelly pained by the loss. Had Kipling written the book at thirty-six instead of at twenty-six he would undoubtedly have given his persons and his action a greater depth of significance. "Captains Courageous" is largely a report of the life led in dangerous waters by the fishermen off the Newfoundland coast. The hero, an American boy who falls from a transatlantic liner and is rescued by a party of these men, is little more than a figure designed to hold the chapters together. But the reporting is superb. "Kim" appeared in 1901, in Kipling's thirty-sixth year, and it is by many admirers called his greatest book. The hero, like Mowgli, has two strains in his education, though his adventures are all among more or less civilized men. His real name is Kimball O'Hara, and his father was an Irish soldier in India, but his skin is as black from the sun as any Hindu's, and his mind is wholly made over into an Oriental thing. He is a gentle and resourceful boy, of genuine spiritual distinction, and destined to many wanderings; for he takes up with a benign old priest from Tibet, Teshoo Lama, and

goes with him on a religious search, at the same time that he becomes engaged with members of the Secret Service. The picture of India is one of the most elaborate ever executed by a western writer between the covers of an imaginative book. "Kim," not only for that reason but because it expresses most sides of Kipling's nature, may outlive many of his slighter works; it may come in time to represent the best of him that is worth preserving.

Conrad 1857–1924

Although Joseph Conrad, like Kipling, first appeared before the public as a writer of tales about far-away places, he had a different kind of tale to tell, and he began under totally different circumstances. He was anything but a prodigy. Kipling at twenty-one was publishing "Departmental Ditties"; Conrad at twenty-one did not know the English language. He was born in Poland in 1857, and his name was Teodor Josef Konrad Karzeniowski. At seventeen he left school to go to sea, and four years later reached England, which he immediately admired so much that he shipped on a British vessel as ordinary seaman, learning the new speech rapidly and becoming a master in the English merchant service by 1884. After ten years of service in various parts of the earth he resigned, being then thirty-seven, and offered a novel, "Almayer's Folly," to a London publisher. It was accepted and it seemed to the reviewers when printed so interesting a study of life in the Malay Archipelago that Conrad was at once hailed as the Kipling of that locality. He was hardly that, as will later be seen, but his success among discriminating readers was assured, and thenceforth he lived altogether on land in the profession of author. For the first ten years he dealt almost exclusively with the sea as he remembered it from his twenty years of experience upon it. His memory intensified a fascination that he had always felt

in the element which is most free if most terrible among the forces of the earth, and these early books are his best, because the most passionate. In the succeeding period he tended to set his scene on land, or at the seaboard; the ocean gradually withdrew from his work until it appeared only now and then as a beautiful reminiscence. Latterly he told stories of England, France, Russia, Italy, South America, and Africa.

The sea purely as an element was not treated by Conrad more than a few times, for his interest was first and last in human character. But the series of "memories and impressions" published as "The Mirror of the Sea" records many aspects of his imaginative experience with great waters, and one story, "Typhoon" (1903), is a complete study of a storm which assailed the vessel of Captain M'Whirr off the coast of the Malay peninsula. Here Conrad's narrative method can be observed to excellent advantage. Detail is piled upon detail in the most careful manner. First the captain is sketched—matter-of-fact, unimaginative, stubborn, and contemptuous of all the signs which are pointing to the approaching monster. The barometer falls at an amazing rate. The sea smells strangely, and has a new color. Clouds appear in ominous formations; there is an unholy calm; then wind and water rush full upon the ship. The author's problem now is to control himself so that the height of his expression may not be reached too soon. Conrad accomplishes this difficult technical feat; time and again the whole fury of the typhoon seems to have been felt, yet there is more and worse coming. At last the vessel arrives safely in port, though it is ludicrously damaged, and the prosaic captain proceeds in his old mood, which for that matter has never been interrupted by the crisis just passed.

Conrad came as closely in "Typhoon" to his ideal of

fiction as he came anywhere. What that ideal was he often tried to make clear in essays or autobiographical passages. He emphasizes the importance of the five senses as mediums through which to render his effects. "My task . . . is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything." He strenuously directs his aim to "the plasticity of sculpture, to the color of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts." He is scrupulous to the point of laboriousness. He wishes to tell everything precisely as it happened, and to do this he is convinced that it is necessary to find "the right word," as Flaubert in France had tried a generation before to find it. "Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world." When he says that fiction is "an imaginative and exact rendering of authentic memories," he is underlining the second adjective. Given extreme seriousness and sincerity, a man of these convictions will write with difficulty, and the impression of strain is strong over all of Conrad's work. This is only partly the result of his having learned English late. He deliberately complicates his artistic problem, and writes in a manner frankly modeled at times on that of Henry James, who was a close friend of his in England.

The foregoing applies even more definitely to his studies of human character, which aspire to a subtlety and a complexity never dreamed of by Kipling, for instance. "What is a novel," Conrad asks, "if not a conviction of our fellow-men's existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality . . . ?" His conviction concerning his fellow-men's existence is that it is predominantly a tragic one. When he has not shown men struggling blindly against unguessed odds, and he has liked to show this in the case of the unimaginative

Englishmen whom he so much admires, he has painted men at full length in the torment of psychological dilemmas. It is "the capacity for suffering," he says, "which makes man august in the eyes of men." Conrad's attitude in such cases is strictly that of an observer—compassionate, to be sure, but philosophically detached. He views the individual man as philosophers have always tended to view him—as a lonely soul, striving in a close envelope of unfriendly facts to maintain his pride, his sense of self, his very existence. In "The Nigger of the Narcissus" (1897) he describes a ship moving off from shore as being like a planet that swims into infinite space, ringed by horizons that may never be attained. A ship is as personal a thing as a man; both feel, in proportion to their capacities, the largeness and darkness of the universe.

The disadvantages for Conrad's art of seeing men like this are that he courts obscurity and that he deals with mental problems which for many intelligent readers of an opposite persuasion do not exist, and so cannot be made to seem important. But the great advantage is that he hereby sees men intensely, notes their every speech and gesture, and desires to create them so that they will shine steadily in any observer's gaze. His great characters have a solidity and a luminosity which are directly enhanced by the dark seas of uncertainty surrounding them. The most famous is the hero of "Lord Jim" (1900), who is ceaselessly tortured by the ambition to retrieve an error in his past which has undermined his self-respect. Another is the Nigger of the Narcissus, who faces death from disease with a set of subtle faculties never perhaps quite comprehended by the reader, as they never are by the other men on the ship. Another is Almayer, who at every turn is weaker than Nature. Another is Nostromo, who although powerful is con-

quered by a silver-mine. Another is the hero of "Youth," confronting failure with an indomitable brow. Captain Whalley, in "The End of the Tether," can never be forgotten by one who has seen him as Conrad meant him to be seen—an old man crouching at the head of the vessel whose command he will not relinquish although he has gone blind. So Captain Lingard moves as an unapproachable figure through several novels; so Heyst, in "Victory," is eternally separate even from the woman whom he has taken to an uninhabited island to love; so Captain Falk, in the story to which he gives his name, hungers forever dumbly for the possession of Hermann's niece.

It is for the creation of such personalities as these, as well as for his luxuriant descriptions of nature on land and sea, that Conrad wins respect from other novelists who can appreciate his craft. Whether he will long have a large popular following is a question harder to decide. He presents many difficulties, in his involved and self-conscious style for one thing, and in his highly intricate manner of narration for another. He is so bent upon completeness and verisimilitude in the rendering of an episode that he insists upon giving it through the mouths of numerous witnesses brought for the purpose upon the scene. His narrators, indeed, sometimes get in the way of the story; the device which they represent becomes a mannerism. But with all his difficulties he is a conscientious and skilful artist; his sincerity, his poetry, and his massive reality can never be profitably denied.

Wells 1866–

A younger man who appeared on the literary scene at about the same time with Conrad was destined to a very different sort of career. Herbert George Wells began by writing tales of pure wonder and ambitious fancy; but he early developed an interest in man as a gregarious animal, and for years his

ruling passion has been sociological.[1] The novels on which his reputation is chiefly based have been anything but patient, laborious structures of mingled realism and romance, as Conrad's novels are; they have been rapid, discursive, provocative studies of definite contemporary problems; they have dealt with "ideas." In their rather diffuse way they have popularized some of the best current thinking, and they have performed a great intellectual service by teaching large numbers of people, particularly young people, the meaning of modernity in ethics, in politics, in love, in marriage, in finance, or in education.

Wells's life up to the time that he became an author is variously reflected in his works. Born the son of a small shopkeeper, who failed, he spent some years with his mother at a country-house where she was housekeeper. Later he was a discontented clerk until sixteen, when the reading which he had energetically been doing at spare moments enabled him to become a teacher at a grammar-school. He obtained a scholarship in a scientific school in London, and there he studied the subject which he has always considered the most important of all, biology. Graduating with honors, he was for a time tutor, lecturer, and journalist, until in 1893, at the age of twenty-seven, he became sure that he would be a writer, and settled down in London to a long and busy career.

He has written in a preface to a novel by one of his contemporaries who is noted for his objectivity: "I have no use at all for life as it is, except as raw material. It bores me to look at things unless there is also the idea of doing something with them. . . . In the books I have written, it is always about life being altered I write, or about people developing schemes for altering life. And I have never once 'presented' life. My apparently most

[1] For his essays, see pages 256–260.

objective books are criticisms and incitements to change." This in the main is true, but it does not sufficiently account for the short stories and the scientific romances which Wells wrote during the first ten years of his literary life, and which in the spontaneity and exuberance of their imagination are more pleasing even to-day to some readers than his more serious, more responsible works.

The short stories are rapid, ingenious, and exciting, and they show the young author, under the influence of the scientific speculations his studies had led him to indulge in, exceedingly expert at slipping his readers off the ordinary plane of living into an altogether different one where new laws operate and all objects have a strange, clear look. It is this power to conceive another world, and what is more to describe it, which has made of Wells a dreamer of Utopias and a reformer of the contemporary mind. But in these earliest works he is free from any other purpose than to perfect himself in "the jolly art of making something very bright and moving." He lets his mind play free among miraculous and often horrible things. In one story an orchid reaches out tentacles and sucks the blood of its sleeping owner. Another studies the psychology of fear; a skeptical man left alone in a room supposed to be haunted is reduced almost to insanity merely by the regular going out of the candles which he has set in various places. A crystal egg in a shop window is found to be a lens through which the inhabitants of Mars examine the earth. A naturalist in Madagascar digs up the vast egg of a prehistoric bird from the warm sand where it has lain for centuries, and in the full heat of the sun it hatches. A teacher of chemistry is blown into the fourth dimension by an explosion in the laboratory, and when he returns he is a reversed man; his right hand is the left, as it would be in a mirror. So on through five fascinating

volumes in which so far there are few hints of the reforming spirit.

It was in the course of the writing of his scientific romances that Wells discovered and applied his gifts for conceiving better societies than the present one. Even these books—particularly the early ones—are inspired principally by a delight in sheer invention. As works of invention they are widely read to-day, being the best-known books of their author, for instance, in continental Europe. "The Time Machine" tells of a marvelous contrivance able to convey its passengers not through space but through time. The narrator and the inventor, quite characteristically for the coming Wells, decide to go forward rather than backward; so with very little delay they find themselves in the year 802,701 A. D. The only change which has taken place on the earth is that the two classes of society, the leisured few and the laboring many, have proceeded in their differentiation until one is a race of delicate, mindless creatures inhabiting the surface of the globe and the other is a race of bestial cannibals who come up when necessary from their homes underground and feed on their aristocratic victims. A view of society is implied here, and it is interesting to see Wells so early inspecting mankind as a whole; but little or no moral is pointed. "The Island of Doctor Moreau" is a grisly account of a scientist who has withdrawn to a remote place and there is bloodily vivisecting the lower animals in a more or less successful effort to hasten evolution and turn them into men. "The War of the Worlds" describes an attack upon the earth by superhumanly intelligent creatures shot in steel bombs from Mars. "The War in the Air" and "The World Set Free" demonstrate the devastating qualities of war in the distant future, and so aim to reduce that institution to its inherent absurdity. "The First Men in the Moon"

contains a picture of the moon drawn in the light of the surest scientific knowledge. There is purpose in each of these books, but there is even more purpose behind "In the Days of the Comet," which tells how men suddenly were cured of the short-sightedness and the intellectual debility which now make of society so muddled and unhappy a thing.

That confusion and that imperfection of organization Wells has set himself in his novels to criticize. He has never been as definite in his proposals as the dramatist Bernard Shaw has been. Wells is not professionally a socialist; he can seldom be pinned down to statistics or consistent theories. But his attitude has been for the most part cogent and steady, and it can be seen to good advantage in one of his expository books, "A Modern Utopia." Here he insists that he never has wished society to be fixed in any one form. He conceives it as essentially a growing thing, an evolving organism. All he desires is that the present restrictions upon freedom of growth be removed—old dead laws, prejudices, sentiments, conventions, and discriminations. He feels in man everywhere a powerful instinct for improvement, but he sees man discouraged from effort by entanglements of habit and superstition. His novels of the contemporary world, generally speaking, show groups of people groping for a healthy solution of problems which till they are solved in the interests of human development will throttle happiness and virtue and art.

From what has been said so far it might be deduced that the novels of Wells are deadly in their seriousness. As a matter of fact, they are replete with wit and spirit; they have established their author as one of the first humorists of his day. Observation of actual life authenticates most of the pages; houses, streets, schools, laboratories, and country landscapes are presented in lively

detail; and the characters, though many of them are not altogether successful to the extent of being made to live outside the books for which they were created, are interesting and brisk. The talk is in almost every case wonderfully eloquent. Wells himself writes with a flow hardly equaled by any contemporary; he knows how to make his people speak forever without being dull. He has mastered the vernacular of his time as few others have mastered it; the most picturesque of slang is sure to be found somewhere in his narrative, and the most familiar attitudes are faithfully expressed. Philosopher as he is, Wells has not walked the world in vain, or filled his eyes and ears with only abstract things.

His earliest realistic novels treated of scenes and experiences that he himself had known, though with interesting differences. "Love and Mr. Lewisham" takes a young man through the assistant-mastership of such a grammar-school as that in which Wells had first taught and to a course in science in London. But instead of graduating him with honors, it gets him married to a poor if attractive girl who by her dependence upon him distracts him from his intellectual duty and ruins his career. The book is a brief against premature marriage, as well as a reminder that there are several things in life as important as love—work, thought, ambition. But it is also a cleverly documented report upon the state of the middle classes intellectually and emotionally. It is one of Wells's first books to attempt a demonstration of how pathetically common the life of common people is. Middle-class language, furniture, dress, education, religion, morals, are mercilessly hit off; a rather seedy society looks at itself in this mirror. "Kipps" comes at the same truth from a different angle. The hero is a draper's clerk, as Wells had been, and the story deals with his failure to make any real use of the twelve hundred pounds

a year which he suddenly inherits. He thinks to rise in society and marry well, but he gives up and marries a servant girl when he realizes that society cannot accommodate itself to rapid changes, or that if it could his pitiful middle-class culture would not support him even among the false comforts of the well-to-do. Wells permits himself at the end to blame his hero's fiasco on "the ruling power of this land, Stupidity." "The History of Mr. Polly" again has for its hero an insignificant draper. But nothing happens to Mr. Polly except that he wearies of the dinginess and pettiness of his business and wanders off to indulge his love of beauty and quaintness in a wider world. His quest comes to naught because the world is not hospitable to such spirits—seeing in them, Wells implies, only their foolishness and not their virtue of mind and temperament. This novel, delightful as it is in its irresponsibility and gaiety, declares itself near the end as a sermon against the prodigality of a society which wastes such excellent human material as Mr. Polly vainly offered. It is also an exposure of the humbug of business; but "Tono-Bungay" (1909) is more distinctly and more powerfully that. "Tono-Bungay" is in many ways the best of Wells's novels, as it is probably his most popular. It is another picture of society in the process of wasting its material because it does not know how to direct its energy. Miriam, a fine and original woman, comes to nothing. George Ponderevo, the hero's uncle, throws away his vigorous if vulgar life making a huge fortune out of a worthless patent medicine called Tono-Bungay. That he loses it at last is not so important as that he prostituted his strength to advertising, publicity, pretense, and meaningless enterprises. Wells was one of the first to ridicule at close hand the shoddy psychology of modern business, and to indicate that it is rendering a once beautiful world less fit to live in. The gusto of

"Tono-Bungay" is enormous; the eloquence is overwhelming; the reporting of contemporary talk is well nigh perfect.

Since 1909 Wells has tended in his novels to treat more specific issues than those of middle-class life and the psychology of business, although he has not failed in any case to relate these to the general social problem. Indeed, he has become increasingly discursive with time, so that whole chapters may be little more than essays or debates on economics, politics, or the position of woman, and the bearings of such questions on the general happiness of the race. "Ann Veronica" introduces into fiction a certain type of modern woman who has since grown very familiar. Ann tires of the stuffy air in her commonplace father's household and, throwing over a condescending male of the town who wishes to marry her and "protect her," goes to London to make her living with her brains. She studies biology, falls in love with a young scientist who already is uncongenially married, and lives with him frankly until his wife is no longer an obstacle to their marriage. Her coolness and intelligence brought a freshness into contemporary studies of women, and she has many imitators in the novel. "The New Machiavelli" exposes the confusion and cynicism of twentieth century politics. "Marriage" deals more maturely with the problem that was considered in "Love and Mr. Lewisham." A scientist who marries after a beautiful courtship finds that social life interferes with his work, so takes his wife to Labrador where they come to an understanding of the things which they consider important. The author implies that in such a helter-skelter existence as is led to-day by even the best people there is too little time for self-scrutiny or for differentiation among ideals. "The Passionate Friends" shows a rare love between two high-minded persons put

to death by the prejudices of a thoughtless society, and more particularly by the brutal possessiveness of a conventional husband. A similar husband is attacked in "The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman." "The Research Magnificent" has a title as well as a theme entirely characteristic of its author. Wells's mind has ever been conducting passionate researches into life, hoping against hope that some formula could be found whereby men and women could learn to live "nobly and thoroughly." Such is the hope of the hero in this case; but the conclusion is that the search is long and hard in the present world.

Wells's optimism, all but baffled in the novels, has in still more recent years fed upon the comforts of religion. This religion is hardly calculated to comfort the orthodox; there is no creed, and there are no evidences. God is an "invisible king," the only knowable thing about whose nature is that he surely favors the instinct in man which desires perfection. Wells discovered him during the World War, at the end of a novel called "Mr. Britling Sees It Through" (1916). Mr. Britling, having lost a son in battle, and being in despair before the spectacle of a world in which the right does not seem to prevail, sits down and creates for his peace of mind a God who is as yet by no means perfect or omnipotent, but who fights with the best in man for the success of that best. "The Undying Fire" is only in form a novel. It is essentially a debate, a modernized Book of Job, in which the hero, stricken by many misfortunes, decides for himself that God is man's innermost unquenchable desire. Thus Wells has come to the logical resting-place of one who seeks an indefinable perfection. Yet it is hardly likely that he will rest there long, for like the nature which the scientist in him worships he is not made to stand still. Not satisfied with narrative which studies

individuals, he has recently written the story of civilization and called it "The Outline of History" (1920), endeavoring in the course of it to come to an understanding of the forces which have made man what he is, for better or for worse. Even vaster projects may now repose in Wells's mind. Always, it seems safe to say, he will be an incorrigible believer in the future, and a relentless critic from that perspective of the present. His works may go the way in time of all doctrinaire writing; other ideas may suit other generations better, and his be forgotten. But he must long remain a monument of intellectual energy, a priest of the cult of human progress.

Bennett 1867–

The names of Wells and Bennett are often coupled in discussions of the contemporary novel, yet the two writers have little in common beyond the fact that both are modern, unsentimental, brisk, witty, and realistic in their descriptions of middle-class life. Arnold Bennett came like Wells from a commercial world and a commonplace atmosphere, and like Wells he has exploited those beginnings in his fiction. At bottom, however, his attitude is widely different from that of any other British novelist of the first rank to-day. He has none of the philosophy or the romance of Hardy, none of the estheticism of Moore, none of the sentimentalism of Barrie, none of the conscious virility of Kipling, none of the musing over destiny and personality of Conrad, and above all none of the critical passion of Wells. He has been to all appearances perfectly satisfied with the life that he has seen; he has seen it with the shrewdest and clearest eyes of his generation; and he has presented it in terms of the sanest realism. He is the greatest of living realists, he is one of the greatest of living novelists, and he has written one of the best English novels of all time.

Bennett has had an uneventful, workmanlike career.

Born in one of a group of pottery-towns which he was later to make famous as the Five Towns, he early received a multitude of impressions which doubtless he never dreamed would work themselves into fiction. He went to London University, returned shortly to spend four years in the law office of his father, practised a little journalism in the office of a local newspaper, became restless, and went to London again, where the call of journalism became stronger than that of the law. He did not begin to take himself seriously as an author until 1893, when he sold a story, and he achieved nothing like success until several years after that. In the meantime he was an indefatigable reader of English and French literature, and he tried his hand at nearly every form of composition—book reviews, articles, sketches, and stories. He went to France in 1900 for a visit which lasted eight years, and there settled down to the composition of his initial series of books.

It was not at once that he developed to the full his technic for reporting the Five Towns. Having determined to make his living by authorship, he turned in these early years to whatever was most profitable, and this meant then, as it has meant on various occasions since, sensational fiction of no very high order. Bennett has classed the novels which he has written under this impulse as Fantasias. They are exceedingly clever, as all that he writes is; but they are distinguished by no genuine imagination, and they are often lacking in the fine sensibilities which set his superior narratives apart in a type of their own. The scene is usually London, and the action is likely to be violent or fantastic. Ghosts, coffins, robberies, and murders, with all the other trash of terror-stories, are handled with real but shallow ingenuity. Perhaps the best single example is "Buried Alive," which has fewest of the crude elements just

enumerated. It became widely popular, and was dramatized by the author for a still greater audience under the title "The Great Adventure." It is the story of Priam Farll, an eminent English painter who so dislikes publicity that when his valet dies he allows the police to think that he himself has died, thinking thus to escape attention disguised as the valet. While the supposed Priam Farll is being buried with honors in Westminister Abbey, the real Farll buries himself in London, marries the woman who had been corresponding with the valet through a matrimonial bureau, is confronted by the valet's deserted wife, and finally gives himself away through his inability to keep from his easel. His pictures are sold, identified as Farll's, and eventually used as evidence of his existence. The book is smart, inventive, and glib; but there is none of the human nature in it which Bennett was to document so carefully in his works of permanent value. In the composition of it Bennett was never restricted to facts, whereas his true forte has always been facts; he has written the most profoundly when he has kept his observation under the strictest control, when he has struggled with the most stubborn, the most unpromising, the dullest material.

In an early autobiographical work, "The Truth About an Author," Bennett analyzed the more serious problems of fiction which he wished to solve. He made clear in the first place his indebtedness to French realistic fiction, the detachment of which he has always emulated. But more important than that, he formulated a philosophy of the commonplace. He spoke of "that intense and unoriginal humanity that distinguishes all of us." The two adjectives here are of equal significance, "unoriginal" referring to the human traits which literally everybody has observed, and "intense" implying that in the right hands those traits may be raised to a high place in the imagin-

ation. He wished to see "the usual miraculously transformed by Art into the Sublime." Critics of Bennett have tended to emphasize his preoccupation with the usual and to forget that his transformation of it has been miraculous. "I am so morbidly avaricious of beauty," he went on to say, "that I insist on finding it even where it is not." This did not mean that he was to gild the more vulgar aspects of human life with false or romantic prettiness; it meant that he was to see the truth with so just and open an eye that it would assume the beauty which pure truth always wears. Fortunately he was equipped with "an omnivorous and tenacious memory"; he was not to forget the most trivial gesture that his gaze had ever caught, even in the years of his boyhood. And as if to guarantee the modernity of his work, he prophesied that he would take "a malicious and frigid pleasure in setting down facts which are opposed to accepted sentimental falsities." He was to be as free from illusion as Bernard Shaw, though incidentally he was never to wage war for definite ideas of philosophy and conduct.

In addition to all this, Bennett happened to be the possessor of a quality which has been of the utmost value to him as a realist—humor. He is one of the most original humorists of his day, and his humor, being original, is also of course unique. It is a direct result of his honesty in scrutinizing both himself and others. Indeed, his observation seems usually to have begun with himself. There is no evidence that he has ever had illusions about himself, and he refuses to have illusions about other people. He is acquainted with all the little vanities and pretenses and exultations of the purely private self—the innumerable emotions which are never confessed and seldom even recognized. His heroes and heroines are all egotists of one sort or another, as human

beings in general are; that is, they are self-centered, proud of their triumphs, unaware of being really heroic but willing to take the credit for being so, watchful for advantages which they can take over the world, intelligent though not always clear-headed, imperfect, decent, and ordinary. In following their thoughts as well as their actions the reader becomes peculiarly their friend because he knows them to be like himself, and incidentally he is surprised to find that any one else knows him so well.

Even among the Five-Town novels there is a division to be made on the ground of merit. All are excellent in their way, but some are lighter than others. "Denry the Audacious," first published in England as "The Card," contains some of Bennett's most easy and charming humor. Denry the hero is a young man of no particular distinction who by mere luck and nerve blunders into one success after another until he reaches the loftiest position conceivable by a Five-Townsman: he is elected mayor. His adventures are exquisitely funny for the most part. Bennett seems constantly to be making sport of him, yet he likes him, and the reader likes him, because he is unable to predict his own successes, and is ingenuously delighted with him when they come. Bennett implies by this or that ironic parenthesis that the mayorship is not the highest reach of human happiness in his personal estimation, and that the people of the Towns are most of them stupid and vain; yet he at no time abandons himself, as Wells would have done and indeed did do in "Tono-Bungay," to a sermon against the insufficiency of the commercial ideal. This is the way that people behave, and that is enough for Bennett. "Helen with the High Hand" is even more irresponsible comedy. It is the story of a clever young woman's conquest of her old uncle, whose household she has entered in spite of a family feud that has long separated them, and whom

she finally induces by her extremest blandishments to take a larger house which she likes better. The incidental comment of Bennett upon the motives and processes of his people is deliciously illuminating. The reader temporarily feels himself to be a specialist in human nature, and congratulates himself upon his ability to see through the externals of conduct. All he needs to do, of course, to disabuse himself of this notion is to close the book and try his luck with new people. Others of the minor Five-Town novels are more serious. "Anna of the Five Towns," one of the first and best, tells a quiet and tragic story of a woman who is loved by two men and is forced to accept the stronger but less likable one. Certain sordid aspects of pottery life are touched upon, and in particular a miser is introduced with great skill. Bennett has always been interested in misers, as many French novelists are; they afford him scope for his calculating, refined genius; he loves to trace their stinginess through every picturesque if forbidding step. Later on, "Riceyman Steps" furnished another instance of his power in this direction. "Whom God Hath Joined" is concerned with the tragedy of divorce as it affects family relationships in Staffordshire. And quite incidentally it contains a number of sentences expressive of Bennett's unique attitude toward the materials of his fiction. "These people are the most commonplace people on earth, but they touch me profoundly," he says; and he speaks of "a strange, overpowering, mystical sense of the wonder of existence" in the presence of the flattest provincials. Bennett has also written a number of short stories upon his favorite themes. They are expert in their various manners, but on the whole he is more impressive when he is covering a larger canvas; reality requires a great deal of room in which to be felt, just as long experience is necessary before one can claim to know life.

Bennett's supreme novel of the Five Towns is "The Old Wives' Tale" (1908). This is his masterpiece, and it is one of the most brilliant books of the twentieth century. It is a very long and detailed account of the lives of two sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines, daughters of a small draper in Bursley. Constance leads a comparatively humdrum existence at home, growing up, marrying, and being left alone at last with her placid thoughts. Sophia has more exciting adventures. She runs away with a cheap scalawag to Paris, is deserted there on the eve of the siege by the Germans in 1870–1871, establishes a boarding-house which makes her a good living, and finally comes home to spend her old age with Constance. Bennett's point of view throughout this epic of the commonplace is never explicitly stated, but it is clearly not satiric, as Wells's might have been. Neither on the other hand is it sentimentally sympathetic. He is profoundly interested in the two women, and as they approach death he is respectful. But the plain truth—which he trusts to be beautiful—is his chief concern at all times. He pours between the covers of the book the richest observations he has been able to make of the five towns which he names, somewhat differently from the atlas, Bursley, Turnhill, Hanbridge, Knype, and Longshaw, with Oldcastle as an occasional sixth. And in addition he lavishes his powers of interpretation upon the figures and the souls of his two heroines. He tells in a later edition of the novel how he happened to create Constance and Sophia. He was in a restaurant in Paris one day when he saw a plump old lady of no particular distinction get up from her table and trudge away, dropping a few bundles as she did so and being much embarrassed at the laughter of the smarter girls who frequented the place. He was moved to the reflection that at some time in this creature's life, and to some few

friends, she had been attractive and important; and he immediately set about filling in an imaginary life for her and for a sister whom he added to make the picture complete. The result, after several years of labor, was "The Old Wives' Tale." The story, when it is not laughable or pathetic or bustling with action, is impressive in the way it rounds out the meaning of existence. All life, including the reader's life, takes on a significance not perhaps deeper than that which it essentially has, but not, certainly, shallower.

Although "The Old Wives' Tale" is generally conceded to be Bennett's chief work, it has a close rival in a series of four novels dealing with the lives of Edward Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways. "Clayhanger" (1910) takes the ordinary if sterling hero through a rather dreary childhood which ends with the breakdown of his father, an old printer; through his arrival at manhood and a kind of success; through his love for the strange and passionate Hilda; through his engagement to her; and finally through the disappointment of his life when she without so much as a warning marries another man. "Hilda Lessways" (1911) tells the same story from the heroine's angle, explaining her forced marriage to the bigamist George Cannon and preparing for her eventual freedom when she can marry Clayhanger. "These Twain" (1916) analyzes in brilliant detail the more or less petty difficulties of their married life together and creates the character of George, Hilda's son by Cannon. In the fourth novel of the series, "The Roll-Call," the younger Cannon practises architecture in London, wins a prize, marries, fails to advance in his profession, and when the World War happens along enlists with a sigh of relief. So much for the skeleton. The flesh and the blood of the series are more important, consisting as they do of humor and pathos, satire and sympathy, observation and creative

interpretation on the magnificent scale to which "The Old Wives' Tale" has accustomed the reader. There are few characters in English fiction so well known to one who has met them as Edward and Hilda. When in "The Roll-Call" (1919) they come to London to assist at the birth of George's child, and George, looking out of an up-stairs window, sees their homely, faithful, provincial shoulders emerging from the taxicab which has brought them from the station, a rush of recognition sweeps over the reader as it does over the son, and life for the moment is inexpressibly enriched. Certain portions of the four novels are already classic, as for instance the account in "Clayhanger" of the decline of Darius, Edward's father; or Edward's visit to Hilda at Brighton; or the visit of both of them to Cannon in the prison, in "These Twain." But the virtue of the whole resides after all in its completeness, its soundness, and its power of convincing the reader in fresh ways that the burden of life, even of every-day life, is what Edward once called it, "exquisite."

Arnold Bennett has explored a limited locality for his material, as Hardy has for his; but he has not read into that locality more than was there. Neither has he found it crying for reform, as Wells has found a similar locality. If he has lost poetry or piquancy by this method, he at least has gained his own kind of truth. And since he tells the truth with genius, he cannot be tiresome until life itself is tiresome.

Galsworthy 1867–

The labors of John Galsworthy have been divided about equally between fiction and the drama,[1] and he has readers in one department who do not know him in the other. Until 1922, when his greatest novel was completed and given to the public as "The Forsyte Saga," there was reasonable doubt as to which of his two forms he excelled in. Now it is

[1] For his plays, see pages 233–238.

plain that he is first of all a novelist; and it is hardly to be denied that in the book just named he has achieved one of the three or four supreme stories of the present century.

The objections to his fiction in former years were chiefly two. In the first place, he seemed to be using literature as a vehicle for moral ideas; he was didactic. In the second place, he was not vigorous and incisive enough in his narrative; instead of making his books frankly tracts, he softened their outlines with "atmosphere" and allowed his criticism of society to be muffled in a vague voice of pity and sympathy. The gentleman and the artist seemed too much mixed within him. His life was known to be comfortable and serene. He had been given the most fashionable kind of education at Harrow and Oxford, and after a trial of the law, with extensive travel for recreation, he had settled down as a country gentleman to write books. The books themselves were beautifully written; if possible too much so. Their language was exquisitely turned; they abounded in subtle descriptive passages; their sentiments were eminently humane; but they somehow lacked the final force which might sharpen them into effective masterpieces.

One of his earliest novels, "The Island Pharisees" (1904), announced the ideas which he was to express with more strength later on; in this book they are expressed in the palest conceivable way. They deal with the middle class, and their drift is bitterly critical. The hero, Richard Shelton, is conducted through a swift and mechanically propelled course of disillusionment concerning his class—the class which he has always considered the healthiest in English life, the normal, the decent class. Contact with a philosophical Frenchman suddenly gives his mind a critical edge, and armed with this he goes about England gathering disgust for the cant, the narrow-

mindedness, the conscious or unconscious hypocrisy, the stupidity with which even his own people discuss marriage, divorce, imperialism, prisons, charity, and the relations between social groups. In the end he gives up the conventional woman to whom he has been engaged and experiences a paralyzing sensation of being out of society altogether. He is free, and he is right, but he is miserable in having lost himself. He embarks upon a search for the beauty, the passion, the justice, and the intelligence which he believes society to have slain; and thus the novel closes. Thus, indeed, Galsworthy was to proceed through all his other fiction; searching rather dumbly for the good life, he was to be predominantly a vague and tentative writer, beautiful on almost every page but rarely or never final.

A much greater book in the mood which has been cleverly labeled "futilitarian" is "Fraternity" (1908), by certain critics declared Galsworthy's best work after "The Forsyte Saga." The dominating character is an old philosopher, Mr. Stone, who is writing an endless book on brotherly love. A beautifully minded if cracked old metaphysician and poet, he reads out paragraphs of his lone masterpiece in the quavering voice of a defeated Chorus, while beneath his very eyes, if he could but see them, tragedies and comedies are being enacted in the real world which give the lie to his speculations. Hilary and his wife Bianca are unaccountably estranged; pride and subtle incompatibilities keep them from reconciliation even while Mr. Stone declares for universal love. Hilary is drawn at the same time toward a destitute little artist's model of the lowest social class; there seems to be a possibility that the two will go away together and be happy in a simpler place; but Hilary's traditions have too strong a hold upon him, and in the end he gives up the ghost of his attachment in despair. Other members of

the poorer class languish in a wretched state of being unable to help themselves; other members of the well-to-do wish to help them and never find out how. There is no fraternity, no inter-feeling. All is paralysis, vain longing, incurable futility.

Galsworthy has found escape from this artistic and moral Slough of Despond in two ways. He has created human beings who are free because they are completely passionate, and he has created others who are real because they live their lives in ignorance or disregard of philosophical problems. The best examples of the first are women, and the best examples of the second are men—particularly old men.

The women are Mrs. Bellew in "The Country House," Mrs. Noel in "The Patrician," Anne Stormer, Olive Cramier, and Nell Dromore in "The Dark Flower," Noel Pierson in "Saint's Progress," and Irene Forsyte in "The Forsyte Saga." With two exceptions these are mature women, and with one exception they are married. Their passion is by no means a plaything; it is not in the superficial sense of the word romantic. It is, Galsworthy seems to say, the fundamental thing in their lives as it is the fundamental thing in all human existence. It is the thing which redeems society from too much comfort, from too much money, from all its crueler or dingier aspects. It is the divine fire in an otherwise earthy world. With this in mind, one cannot perhaps object that the women who possess it are considerably alike. They are invariably quiet with a hunted quietness; they are soft and mysterious and beautiful; they suffer without end from the grosser qualities of husbands, fathers, relatives, and friends who set respectability above private integrity, who honor law before love. One cannot object, that is, on the score of poetry or philosophy; but one can object on the score of fiction. This very same-

ness which makes a half-dozen women impressive as documents robs them of validity as characters. They are almost completely lay-figures which their creator has employed to preach a sermon on the necessity of passion. Take their passion away and little remains except a colorless, stereotyped beauty. It is not they who feel the passion in the first place; it is Galsworthy. So even they do not redeem him altogether from the charge that his fiction is more himself than mankind, more propaganda than truth. It is as if he had decided in the calm of his study that passion is important and had invented some people to put it in; not as if he had found the people first and presented them initially as people, with passion as only one, if an important one, of their qualities.

The old men of Galsworthy, however, are indisputably a triumph. They are obviously the fruit of observation, and one suspects that they are the persons whom Galsworthy has most relished living among. He understands them perfectly; he remembers even the most trivial thing that they do; they are marvels of objective and interesting reality. He has arrived at them through a prolonged study of the institution of the family. Although upon occasion he has seemed to be discussing the family as a sociological problem, he has at all times given an accurate, living picture of it; it has lived for him as people live for any first-rate creative writer—with flesh-and-blood reality. There is the Pendyce family in "The Country House." There is the Valleys family in "The Patrician." There are the four Freeland brothers in "The Freelands." Above all, there are the innumerable Forsytes in "The Forsyte Saga."

"The Forsyte Saga" has grown slowly from its beginnings in the first of the four novels which compose it, "The Man of Property" (1906), through "In Chancery" (1920), "To Let" (1922), and "The White Monkey"

(1924). In the volume of nearly nine hundred pages which now contains the first three there are in addition two interludes, or short stories, called "Indian Summer of a Forsyte"—one of the finest products of Galsworthy's pen—and "Awakening." The six narratives together make up an epic of truly heroic proportions, an epic of the English family; and it is one of the greatest contributions to contemporary fiction. The theme, if a theme be sought, is, as always with Galsworthy, social. The conflict of forces is a conflict between the sense of property on the one hand—middle-class materialism or British Philistinism—and the sense of beauty on the other—the free worship of beauty and love which does not count the cost, either in possessions or in social standing. The first force is represented chiefly by Soames Forsyte, a man who increasingly demands the reader's pity because of his unconquerable deficiency in the lovelier qualities of the race. He is rich, successful, and upright, but he never quite sheds the sense that he owns all that he has; whereas, Galsworthy indicates, the most precious things are common, and cannot be cornered. Soames even owns his wife, Irene; and her struggle to escape from his cold grasp furnishes the plot of the novel. She is Galsworthy's masterpiece among his quiet, soft, passionate women, and her story is the story of her loving two other men, Bosinney and young Jolyon Forsyte, until she achieves the freedom which is her necessity and her destiny. But neither the plot nor the theme is the crowning virtue of "The Forsyte Saga." That virtue inheres in its complete and permanent picture of a certain kind of life. The family which it describes is almost bewilderingly large, and it has a sufficient variety. Only Soames and Irene are uniquely one thing or another—types around which a war of forces could be supposed to wage. The rest either stand for different stages of social growth or

are in themselves mixtures of many qualities. The essential fact is that they are real. They exist as acquaintances of the reader, being born, working, loving, marrying, growing old, and dying in the various houses which the reader visits so often that they become as familiar as his own. Three generations pass before the narrative is done. Perhaps the first of these is the finest in point of characterization, including as it does the six elder Forsyte brothers, James, Swithin, Roger, Nicholas, Timothy, and Old Jolyon, and the four sisters, Ann, Julia, Hester, and Susan. Old Jolyon and his line, down through Young Jolyon to June, Jolly, Holly, and Jon, will engage any one's affection. The death of Old Jolyon is told in the interlude called "Indian Summer of Forsyte," and it is one of the most magnificent deaths recorded anywhere in fiction. The old man was a ripe, confessed pagan, enjoying his money, his wine, his food, and his children to the utmost limit, and incidentally, as with all true pagans, feeling if only fitfully the urge of beauty in a wider and freer world than the one into which he had been born.

"Indian Summer of a Forsyte" was first published in a collection of "Five Tales" which marks Galsworthy's best achievement in the short story. Another story there, "The Stoic," describes the death of a similar relic of the passing generation, Sylvanus Heythorp. This glorious old die-hard defeats his legal and commercial enemies in the end, not to speak of the prim and holy daughter whom he hates, by ordering a sumptuous dinner and eating and drinking himself to Homeric oblivion. "The Apple Tree" in the same volume is a surpassingly beautiful story of an idyllic but tragic love. "The Juryman" shows a commonplace Englishman suddenly struck through by a shaft of the abstract beauty and tenderness which to Galsworthy is all-important. And "The Feud,"

which in future editions of the "Five Tales" will replace "Indian Summer of a Forsyte," now removed to the "Saga," analyzes with the closeness of Tolstoy the dire results of a trivial dispute between two farmers, allowed to grow until it touched with death and ruin both their lives.

In John Galsworthy English fiction possesses one of its most finished and admirable writers, but a man who has left to posterity only a few characters and a few situations sufficiently free from the peculiar problems of their day to be long worthy of acquaintance. The Forsytes are that, and some others; and they, perhaps, are enough. Most great novelists are remembered for one or, at the farthest, two or three books. Galsworthy will be remembered for "The Forsyte Saga" as Bennett will be remembered for "The Old Wives' Tale" and the Clayhanger-Lessways tetralogy.

Maugham 1874–

A rival of both "The Old Wives' Tale" and "The Forsyte Saga" for the position of first place among twentieth-century British novels has been written by a younger man who in no other work has approached his masterpiece. William Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage" was published in 1915, during the World War, and perhaps for that reason did not produce the immediate effect upon readers which it deserved to produce. But it has stolen quietly and surely into general estimation until now there are critics prepared to call it the triumph of its generation. However that may be, it is excellent evidence in support of the hypothesis that a writer will do his best work when he is drawing upon his own experience. Maugham, who incidentally is most popularly known for his numerous witty plays, has written several novels which have been ingenious in conception and skilful in execution. But they have been based upon situations invented for the

purpose; they have been significant for their art rather than for their life. "Of Human Bondage" is more than a situation; it is a life, and it is the author's life. It is perhaps the most brilliant of the many autobiographical novels which the present century has seen.

Passing notice may be given to a minor novel of Maugham's, "The Moon and Sixpence." It is his second-best book, and significantly enough it also is based upon the known life of a man—not the author in this case, but a modern French painter of genius, Paul Gauguin. Maugham's hero, Charles Strickland, happens to be an Englishman, but he pursues a career closely resembling that of the Frenchman. In middle age he suddenly abandons his business and his family for art, painting in Paris through years of cruel poverty until opportunity offers for a voyage to the South Seas, where he works on in comparative solitude until his horrible death from leprosy in a cottage whose walls he has covered with the finest, most mysterious products of his genius. The book is chiefly a study of temperament. Strickland is an inarticulate man who knows within himself exactly what he wants to do but who cannot express himself in any other medium than color and line. Outwardly he is callous to an almost fiendish degree; utterly indifferent to the claims of other people, he rides them down, snarling at those who would help him and contemptuous of those who condemn him. Inwardly he is filled with a vast desire for beauty of a sort which has never before been captured; this ideal he pursues to a more or less successful end. Maugham has employed all of his great intelligence, and not a little of his characteristic bitterness, in the account of this man dominated by a terrible purpose.

"Of Human Bondage" tells the story, with certain inevitable modifications, of the first thirty years of Maugham's life. He studied first in England and then

in Germany; tried painting for a while in Paris, but gave it up; became a physician in London; and only later embraced the profession of author. His hero, Philip Carey, goes to school in England and Germany, spends futile years among the artists of Paris, returns to London for a medical training, and leaves the reader at the close to continue happily in a country practice. The greatness of the book, however, consists in two qualities which are independent of the plot. One of these is completeness in the picturization of life; the other is integrity in the presentation of a personality. Philip has a multitude of adventures, some of them fortunate but most of them wretched. The triumph of Maugham is that he has been able to render any aspect of existence which his hero has touched both interesting and important. The reader looks through Philip's intelligent and remarkably clear eyes at an English school, a German university, a colony of artistic failures in France, a dreary business house in London, the streets of London, a medical college, a hospital, and a village on the British coast. All these places, and many more, come as close to the reader as they did to Philip, and Maugham may digress as long as he likes in analysis or description; the words are fascinating because they are true. The gallery of characters is equally long and good; Philip's uncle and aunt, Miss Wilkinson, Weeks the American in Germany, Hayward the esthete, Cronshaw and Lawson the artists, Fanny Price the pathetic suicide, Mildred, the Athelnys, and Dr. South—these suffer, rejoice, and live forever. Philip himself, the personality through which the rich experience of the book is passed, learns much from the world, and teaches the reader much. The book is an intensely personal one. Philip is not in the least concerned, as one of Wells's heroes might have been, with showing the world how to live; he struggles to wrest from the world the secret of

its own ways. Physically handicapped by a club-foot, he is inordinately sensitive to cruelty and disappointment; he is forced to ask time and again what life means, for there seems to be no reason in its behavior toward him. His conclusion is that life has no meaning which can be set forth in a formula; it is this for one person and that for another, but if one has lived thoroughly one's memories will shape themselves into a pattern as rich though as unsymmetrical as those patterns formed by the colors in an oriental rug. It is a wise young man who has learned this at thirty; a generous, intelligent, clear-minded, imaginative, and in no respect morbid human being. One other character in "Of Human Bondage" can scarcely be described. Mildred, the commonplace girl whom Philip so stubbornly and unaccountably loves to his loss, is unique in fiction. There seems to be no reason for her being loved; but she undeniably is, as the suffering which she contributes to Philip's sum is undeniable. She takes her important place among the innumerable facts of existence which have educated Philip in patience, in understanding, in matureness and profoundness of emotion.

Lawrence 1887–

Among the still younger generation of British writers who will dominate the field of fiction in the third decade of the twentieth century as Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy have dominated it in the first two decades, David Herbert Lawrence is to all appearances the most powerful. His temperament is a novelty in contemporary literature, marking him as essentially of a new age, and separating him from his elders by a gulf which is presented by more than the World War. The war created in him the disillusion, the contempt for democratic masses, and the indifference toward all public questions which are so bitterly expressed in his pages. But the growing cynicism of the century

finds its culmination in him, as it does in several of his brilliant young coevals. This cynicism denies the validity of all experience save that which is personal, self-centered, and free. Ethics, politics, duty, responsibility do not exist; only the processes of individual psychology are worth detailing; and here Lawrence speaks with authority, not only as one who has explored his own tremendous endowment of emotion, but as one who possesses the knowledge which the modern science of psychology, and more particularly of what is called psychoanalysis, has made current.

The son of a Nottinghamshire coal-miner, Lawrence after some years of teaching in London began writing novels, and his third one, "Sons and Lovers" (1913), made him immediately famous. It is in some measure autobiographical, as the hero Paul Morel is brought up among miners and sees many rough aspects of life. More important as autobiography are the experiences of Paul as a lover. These may have little or no basis in outward fact, but they are central to Lawrence's psychology, and they are described in a manner which has since become proverbial in his books. Paul, like most of Lawrence's heroes, is a passionate but a baffled lover—baffled not only by the refusal of women to return his love but by his own failures to satisfy his nature completely. As many scenes of revulsion and disgust are given as of attraction or happiness. Lawrence has studied more carefully than any other dead or living author the reverse side of love—the side of hate, of sudden disillusionment, of self-love interfering with love of another. Lawrence's people are stubbornly egoistic; they in no case consent to surrender their private wills; they wish always to feel themselves intact. Love is the chief enemy of self-possession; war is Lawrence's invariable theme. His masterly short stories, now con-

tained in three volumes, pursue the same subject, as do several later novels. Or they pursue a kindred subject, such as the power of touch to break down the ego, which is treated in "The Blind Man," one of Lawrence's finest short stories in a volume called "England, My England" (1922).

Huxley 1894–

The tendencies of prose fiction in the present decade are carried by Aldous Huxley to much the same conclusion as that to which he carries its poetry. From irony like his it will be possible for his followers to escape only by turning to romance, by resolutely shutting their eyes to doubt and by deliberately feeding upon hope. In the meantime, his position is very striking. With the rest of his generation, he has come to suspect the validity of the ways of life which were generally accepted during the past century but which were broken up in the turmoil accompanying the recent war. He has seen the established virtues practised without reward and the established vices practised without penalty. He has seen prudence dejected and folly triumphant. Moreover, the unusual amount of learning which he possesses confirms him in his pessimism. History has assured him that the general direction of mankind is full of purposeless drifting; science has assured him that men, if more than puppets, are at best no more than animals. The mystery of life itself may possibly be discovered to reside in the atom. The mystery of character, of love, hate, ambition, devotion, may turn out to depend upon the chemical action of obscure glands. Human existence may therefore be best regarded as a dance, either a dance of life or a dance of death. Thus, indeed, the matter is regarded in Huxley's novels and short stories. He fills them with persons, mostly belonging to a leisured class, who profess the maddest ideas and follow the most unregulated careers. His masterpiece, "Antic Hay" (1923),

exhibits a group of smart and intellectual Londoners all contending in their different ways with the discomforts of boredom. They are not, strictly speaking, a group, for they come and go with only occasional contacts, weaving a pattern which Huxley knows is meaningless. He does not seem to be distressed by their eccentric habits. He at least allows them to say and do whatever they will, concerned himself with nothing but making an ironic comedy out of the performance. Always perfectly self-possessed, he plays his sardonic wit over his characters, finding something absurd in every step they take. Yet back of this apparently irresponsible mood of his lies something more austere. He genuinely admires the undeluded intelligence. He has a secret longing for a universe which should be orderly and just, harmonious and beautiful. Not finding it, he suffers disappointment, which imparts to all he writes that note of bitterness which is as obvious as his mirth. His bitterness gives him, as an artist, one of his chief merits. However ironically he may represent his whirling world, he holds his materials well in hand and shapes them with cutting outlines.

Repellent to many readers as Lawrence and Huxley are, they at any rate are noteworthy as indicating an honesty and an energy in the new generation which must insure distinction to fiction in the future. Whatever the younger novelists decide is important or unimportant, they may be trusted to follow their decision to its bitterest end. They will be savage, perhaps; they will in spite of that, or possibly because of it, unearth unexpected facts of human nature, and they will present these facts with a sincerity and a genius which fiction at no time in the twentieth century has been without. They will only carry on a work begun by Moore, Conrad, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Maugham.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMA

THE eighteen-nineties, which saw literature in England quickened on so many sides, saw no more remarkable change on the whole than that which took place in the drama. Here the process was not, as it was in the case of poetry, the substitution of one set of writers who were excellent for an older set who had been equally excellent; it was the creation of an entirely new excellence, almost of an entirely new art, where none had been immediately before. The stage plays of the nineteenth century had been for the most part inferior as literature; that is to say, they had little value out of the theater. They might be amusing, as many of the adaptations of French farce were, or they might be effective with the singularly unsophisticated audiences which went to see them; but their triumph was ephemeral, and they now make dreary reading when they are read at all. During the last three decades of the century W. S. Gilbert, at first alone and later in collaboration with the musician Sir Arthur Sullivan, made himself a force in satiric, burlesque comedy, but while his influence has been on the whole enormous, and his charm enduring, his name properly belongs to opera and to extravaganza. It was still possible for George Bernard Shaw, settling in London about 1880, to shake his head and proclaim that there was no living drama worthy of the name.

Pinero 1855–

The names of only two playwrights emerge from the period before 1890. Sir Arthur Wing Pinero has been prolific, and his technical proficiency has obtained for most of his plays at least a temporary popularity. He is remarkably deft at unfolding his plots, his dialogue is simply and expertly handled, and in general he exhibits a shrewd understanding of what constitutes effectiveness behind the footlights—his early experience as an actor standing him here in good stead. Almost from the beginning he has exercised his hand in three types of play: the farce, the sentimental comedy, and the serious "problem" play; but he is most important for his problem plays. In this department he has come fairly close to eminence in at least three instances. In "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," "Iris," and "Midchannel" he has confined his attention to mature members of a complicated society, and has studied with considerable care the tragic problems which arise out of their loves and marriages. The influence on English drama of Henrik Ibsen—to be discussed later in the present chapter—has nowhere been more pronounced than it is in the case of these three plays, all of which present practically insoluble difficulties in human relations, and each of which ends with the suicide or the ruin of the chief character. "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" (1893), perhaps the most famous of Pinero's plays, tells the story of Aubrey Tanqueray's second marriage, the new wife, Paula, being a woman with a past which must be hidden from Aubrey's many friends, and particularly from his daughter, if the marriage is to be a happy one. The concealment, owing to a variety of circumstances, is not effected, and Paula, lacking the support which she had expected from the indecisive Aubrey, kills herself in the end to avoid further disclosure and humiliation. The tragedy in "Iris" is more definitely the

outcome of character. Iris Bellamy has the fatal weakness of being unable to exist without luxury, so that when she is deprived of her fortune she cannot remain true to her impecunious lover, Laurence Trenwith, who has gone to the colonies to make a fortune for her. He returns to find her living with the millionaire Maldonado, and in the last scene both men desert her, leaving her in the depths of helplessness and despair. "Midchannel" deals with the problem of incompatibility in marriage. Zoe and Peter Blundell are two proud persons who cannot live peaceably together, Zoe being a case of modern "nerves" and Peter a conceited and possessive brute. During a brief residence in Italy she compromises herself with Leonard Ferris, and although upon her return to England she is willing to make it up with her husband, he hounds her literally to suicide, which is all the more desirable to her since her lover Ferris has been dismissed and in anger has engaged himself to an innocent girl whom both of them know.

Pinero's reputation will stand or fall by such serious efforts as these. Unfortunately, even in them he has failed to show a really penetrating insight into human nature. He has been willing to accept the current dogmas and prejudices of society—at least as material for drama—and although he has indicated their radical injustice here or there, he by no means has proved that he could see through them to motives which are universal. Compared with one who came after him—Bernard Shaw—he seems relatively feeble and unintelligent.

Jones 1851–

Henry Arthur Jones, like Pinero, has developed in power and skill under the influence of new fashions which he himself did not invent, but like Pinero he has remained a second-rate though effective writer. He also has been prolific, and has ranged from farce to tragedy; he also is most impor-

tant for his problem plays. "Mrs. Dane's Defence" is another story of a woman who unhappily cannot live down her past. Mrs. Dane wishes to marry young Lionel Carteret, but under a cross-examination by his father she breaks down and confesses to an affair she once had on the Continent, and so is beaten. The cross-examination is ably conducted; the philosophy of life behind it is never examined. In "The Case of Rebellious Susan" a test is conducted of a wife's right to retaliate against her husband's infidelity with infidelity of her own. Another cross-examination is held, and many purely social complications arise which doubtless will be less interesting to future generations of readers than they are to this, or possibly not interesting at all. "Michael and his Lost Angel" (1896), a tragedy, is perhaps the best of Jones's plays. It recounts the struggle in the breast of Michael Feversham, a clergyman, between sacred and profane love. Both Feversham and Audrie Lesden, the pagan woman who has become infatuated with him, and with whom against his will he himself becomes infatuated, are ruined by the inhuman rigidity of his conscience, which too consistently defies nature. The play is effective theatrically rather than in any other way. The same incurable artificiality which was characteristic of Pinero operates to render this spectacle of egregious human folly in the last analysis unconvincing and without permanent significance.

Wilde 1856–1900

Pinero and Jones have written good plays; they have not produced good literature. A play becomes literature when it possesses, over and above the qualities which make it interesting in the theater, wisdom or beauty enough to give it validity for any reader at any place at any time. The author must have brought with him into the theater some attitude or some genius which he has developed in the larger world

outside: he must seem to be a person in his own right. There is no personality in the plays of Pinero and Jones, and as a direct consequence there are no characters. Suddenly, between the years 1892 and 1895, there appeared a personality upon the English stage so distinct and fascinating that audiences were compelled to give it their attention, and playwrights were bound to pay tribute to its potency. This was the personality of Oscar Wilde, who from being an esthete and a minor poet[1] now turned to being a comic dramatist of the first rank. Wilde brought into comedy both an attitude and a gift. The attitude was one of superciliousness toward all people who are not clever; that is, toward those who do not understand that the intellect is something to play with rather than work with. It was an attitude of superiority to ordinary morality, to conventions of thought and particularly of speech, to stupidity and staleness of any kind. The intellectual atmosphere of the drama was stale; Wilde wished to energize it with wit and insolence. The gift was a gift for epigram such as perhaps no other British writer has been able to boast. It was a necessary corollary of the attitude in the sense that unconventionality of thought always encourages surprising and paradoxical speech; current platitudes are then inverted so as to confound their users and throw new light upon nature and human nature. But what is more important yet, Wilde seems to have been born with a talent for conversation. A born snob, as Bernard Shaw calls him, he was also a born wit, and the fact that he was born in Ireland may have had much or little to do with the matter. Legend has it that his own talk was even more brilliant than that of the persons in his plays. At any rate, he was stamping himself upon the drama at a time when it was devoid of anything but technical, theatrical virtue, when

[1] For his poems, see pages 132–133.

it was attending altogether too narrowly to situations and devices.

To Wilde at his best, situation and plot were of inferior interest, and character in the ordinary sense of that term was of no importance whatever. Like certain of the Restoration comic writers, with whom he is often compared and from whom he unquestionably derived much of his material, he demanded nothing more than that a group of graceful and accomplished ladies and gentlemen should be brought together on the stage so that they could talk—and then that they should be allowed to talk like Wilde. With one exception he created no characters that are distinct from one another and so have existence outside the play. His heroes and heroines are remarkably alike, and his situations do not materially vary. The epigram was the thing; that was his contribution and his triumph. Significantly enough, many who can repeat a dozen or more of the witty speeches with which he sprinkled his dialogue cannot say for certainty from which play or from which person they come. It is the speeches alone that have existence outside the theater. Shakspere created Falstaff and a score of other people who now march up and down the world in full life; Wilde set loose some dozen paradoxes. The following are examples. "Nothing succeeds like excess." "The youth of America is their oldest tradition." "Children begin by loving their parents. After a time they judge them. Rarely, if ever, do they forgive them." "Men marry because they are tired; women because they are curious. Both are disappointed." "More than half of modern culture depends upon what one should n't read." "Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who have n't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die." "I can resist everything except temptation." "Life is far too important a

thing ever to talk seriously about it." "As soon as people are old enough to know better, they don't know anything at all." "It is perfectly monstrous the way people go about saying things against one behind one's back that are absolutely and entirely true." It is easy to see how such lines, delivered before large audiences, pleased some people and shocked others. In their brevity and brilliance they are irresistible, but in their implications they are destructive of the sentiments—of family, of marriage, of morality—which are usually considered sacred. But the best of English drama in the following twenty years was to echo these epigrams; Wilde was an innovator in more than a single sense.

Unfortunately for himself and for literature, Wilde was not permitted to attain perfection in the form which he had invented or revived. When he ceased writing plays in 1895 he had produced only one which was free from certain melodramatic elements which he carried over from the older tradition. He began indeed in the early eighties by writing sheer melodrama, but ten years elapsed before he made his proper entrance upon the dramatic scene with "Lady Windermere's Fan" in 1892. In this comedy Lord Darlington contains in himself the promise of the whole line of cynical wits who were to make their creator the most talked-of living playwright. His brilliance flags after the first act, however, and he gives way before a plot which carries Wilde to excesses of sensation and bathos. "A Woman of No Importance" the next year introduced the glittering figure of Lord Illingworth, who like Lord Darlington derives his cleverness from the fact that he has led an unscrupulous life and so can condescend to the proprieties. But his wickedness is rebuked in the end by the triumph of Mrs. Arbuthnot, a good and uninteresting woman whom he once wronged; and so another comedy closes on a false note.

Two years later "The Importance of Being Earnest" exhibited Wilde's genius at its zenith. No serious issue is fought out in this delightfully absurd piece. The hero, Algernon Moncrieff, is a wholly irresponsible wit who indulges his captivating insolence at every opportunity and at the expense of everybody. There is the thinnest pretense to a plot, based upon the question whether Jack Worthing, who shares with Algernon the honor of being hero, is rightly named Jack or Ernest. When it is proved that his name is Ernest, and therefore that he is fit to ask for the hand of Gwendolen Fairfax, he realizes "the vital importance of Being Earnest"—not before, or for any other reason. Algernon comes as near as any of Wilde's mouthpieces to having an independent personality. His humor and his perverse charm are so real that he can legitimately be said to live.

"Salome," from which an opera was made, and which is at present one of the most widely known of Wilde's works, is the only tragedy in which he may be said to have succeeded. It is based upon the story in St. Mark of John the Baptist and Salome, the daughter of Herod. The original narrative has been elaborated by an exotic and somewhat feverish imagination, and overlaid by a rich covering of highly wrought imagery. The florid vein which can be found in Wilde's fiction appears here in all its more or less morbid strength. Beautiful, mysterious phrases hover over the unhealthy scene as if they were on wings, and the beheading of John, or Jokanaan, comes as the climax of a most intense and hectic scene. This play is one of the chief weapons in the hands of those critics who dismiss Wilde as an unnatural and pernicious writer. Wilde would gladly have accepted the charge of being unnatural, for in his vocabulary naturalness was almost synonymous with stupidity; but he would have claimed with justice that he

had produced a work of strange beauty and power. Perhaps "Salome" will vie with "The Importance of Being Earnest" for the privilege of perpetuating the fame of this extraordinary man.

Shaw 1856–

At the same time that Wilde was bursting upon the British public, another Irishman was beginning to make a reputation which took longer to reach considerable dimensions but which has since grown to be the greatest of the present age. George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in the same year with Wilde, and came over to London at twenty not so much that he might educate himself as that he might educate England. His education at home had been chiefly in music and painting; he now was to acquaint himself with the best ideas of Europe in philosophy and sociology, and he was to preach those ideas through any medium which offered itself. Nearly twenty years passed before he found expression in the drama. Meanwhile he wrote several novels; read Henry George and Karl Marx; modified their socialistic doctrines to suit his active and independent mind; joined the Fabian Society, an organization whose purpose was to debate and disseminate the truth about the relations between the social classes; served the press in the capacities of art critic, musical critic, and dramatic critic;[1] and finally in 1892, the year of "Lady Windermere's Fan," produced his first play, which was called "Widowers' Houses."

Before Shaw's plays can be profitably discussed, his attitude, his ideas, and his personality must be defined. He brought to English comedy as much wit as Oscar Wilde was bringing, and he brought infinitely more. He brought a sense of social responsibility which was wholly the opposite of Wilde's flavor of gentlemanly nonchalance. As much as Wilde he scorned unintelligence, but the in-

[1] For his essays, see pages 252–256.

telligence which he recommended was to be a cure for distressing evils rather than a gesture of careless contempt. He was bent upon searching with his very keen faculties every assumption and every sentiment which lay beneath contemporary literature and contemporary psychology; his comedy was aimed definitely at the destruction of a system of moral conventions which by instinct and by education he detested.

If comedy is to be properly destructive it must be informed with ideas; Shaw has fairly bristled with ideas, and most of them, by constant and brilliant repetition, he has made familiar if not acceptable to his public. Here he joins forces with Henrik Ibsen, the nineteenth-century Norwegian dramatist who had been the greatest influence in the theater of Europe for at least two hundred years. Shaw, partly by a book on Ibsen which he wrote in 1891, but chiefly by the example of his plays, has been the channel through which the intelligence and the art of Ibsen have exerted most definitely their power in the English-speaking world. Shaw derived many of his ideas from other sources; from Ibsen he derived the assurance that it was worth while to attempt serious and thoroughgoing analysis of society through the drama.

Shaw begins with the assumption that society is confused because it does not know its own mind. It has in reality a collective mind, but large spaces therein are blankly unconscious or else are rotten with illusion and sentiment. If society only knew it, poverty, the greatest of all crimes, could be abolished by the collective will; the mass of people included within the middle class could be leavened by honest thought and made sensible; violence and evil could be eradicated as any disease can be eradicated; the people could cease to be the victims of military exploitation, could cease to be the instruments by which any brutal leader worked his will. But though he is an

enemy of violence, Shaw is the champion of intellectual and spiritual force. He despises Napoleon because he was so stupid as to have illusions about himself; he admires Cæsar because he had humor and imagination, as well as an irresistible will. Here Shaw shows the influence of Ibsen and of the German philosopher Nietzsche. Humility is a contemptible virtue. Ignorance is no excuse for inferiority—"hell is paved with good intentions." Nature, and the life force, are never to be denied. Morality can cease to become a dreary duty and become the privilege of spirited human beings, of supermen. Heretofore it has been possible to say of a great many persons that they were too good, meaning that they were too weak to assert themselves in a vigorous world; it ought not to be possible to be too good, for goodness is the same as strength and intelligence. Ethics may be the product of thought, and not its enemy. Morality may be based on something more permanent than the conventions of the majority; it may be the expression of those few or those many who are keenly alive, and know as individuals what they want to do. Human relations do not need to be accepted at their traditional value, especially when they work cruelty and hardship, or when they bore the best minds. It has generally been assumed that children owe obedience to parents; parents, rather, owe obedience to children, and when they are in the way with their prejudices, which are death, they should give way before the reason of the children, which is likely to be life. Society, as the followers of Marx and Darwin presume, is not mechanically regulated; it moves in accordance with the will of its most enlightened members. Literature and art suffer more than anything else from ignorance.

Both in the long prefaces which Shaw has prefixed to his plays and in the plays themselves he has endeavored

to drive these convictions into the consciousness of the public. Because of his fertility and his willingness, at least in imagination, to present the other side of the case, he has sometimes seemed inconsistent; yet in the long run he has been remarkably consistent and serious, and he has impressed his personality upon all who are capable of being attracted by sheer, naked sense. He has been frankly didactic, even to the point of incurring the charge of intolerance and puritanism; he has announced himself as a foe of the sensual majority, and every sentence he has written has been stiff with impatience at anything but brains.

He has been serious. Yet the ordinary opinion of him is that he is a clown, a mountebank, a man who has nothing consistent to say and desires only to turn common sense upside down for the mystification or amusement of his audiences. Here he suffers the fate which clear and lively minds have always suffered. The lazy majority punish his unconventionality by dismissing it as funny; not understanding his meaning, or refusing to agree with it, they decide that it conceals only another paradox, or another attempt to be shocking and sensational. A case in point is his opinion of Shakspere. Shakspere is one of the "divinities" whom Shaw has tried to reduce to the dimensions of humankind, in the conviction that blind worship of anything is bad for the mind. He examined Shakspere and found that although he is an absolute master of language, of narrative, and of the music of words, he has no ideas. The greatest of poets, he is one of the least of philosophers; there is no proof that he ever really scrutinized and criticized the motives of men. The cry went up at once that Shaw had called himself better than Shakspere. Actually he had said only that his mind was better than Shakspere's, and he meant it. He was not afraid to question one of the English idols. In-

cidentally he has done the reputation of Shakspere a great deal of good by thus distinguishing between his content and his magic. Shakspere henceforth will not be burdened with the necessity of appearing profound, but can exert his full force as the most skilful manipulator of words and moods who ever wrote.

Shaw is possessed of the brightest wit now known to literature; he has raised more laughs both in the theater and out than any of his contemporaries. Yet even here it has not always been possible to say whether his intention originally was to be funny. Like any great comic writer, and especially Molière, with whom he is certainly worthy to be compared, he knows how to destroy error by laughter. Often, however, his comic effects are the result purely of his quickness and directness and accuracy of vision, the triumph wholly of his uncommon sense. Something which he may say with the utmost gravity will be amusing only to those who have not heard it before, or who cannot perceive its bearings; what may seem practical and simple to him will seem refreshingly absurd to slower intelligences. After that is said, nevertheless, it remains to say that Shaw has proved himself the master of most of the devices designed to elicit laughter. He has enormous gusto, he can write with unexampled sharpness and point, he can see the ludicrous side of his own case, he does not hesitate to employ the broader kind of horse-humor when he so desires, and his eloquence is irresistible.

To come to a closer inspection of his plays themselves, it is well to say first that Shaw's chief interest in writing them has been critical and psychological. He has endeavored to place his people in situations which conventional writers would treat romantically or sentimentally, and then to show them doing what normal people would do. This, as he once warned, does not mean average

people. Average people would be romantic and sentimental. They would do what they had seen other people do in novels and plays. Shaw means by normal something that may be summed up as intelligent, individual, self-respecting, bold, and perhaps impudent. He means himself. If the complaint be made that he is not everybody, he admits that. If the complaint be made that he represents too few of the softer and more soothing qualities of human nature, he replies that he thinks those qualities on the whole vicious because they prevent the healthy working of the mind. His objection to the ordinary problem play, such as Pinero and Jones have usually written, is that it does not pierce far enough into convention to find the enduring springs of action. "The vapidness of such drama," he says, "lies in the fact that in them animal passion, sentimentally diluted, is shown in conflict, not with real circumstances, but with a set of conventions and assumptions half of which do not exist off the stage, whilst the other half can either be evaded by a pretense of compliance or defied with complete impunity by any reasonably strong-minded person. Nobody can feel that such conventions are really compulsory, and consequently nobody can believe in the stage pathos that accepts them as inexorable fate, or in the genuineness of the people who indulge in such pathos. Sitting at such plays we do not believe; we make believe." He gives as his own purpose in drama "the presentation in parable of the conflict between man's will and his environment." His plays are a succession of attempts to show will triumphant over weakness, intelligent hope triumphant over blind pessimism, and reason triumphant over sensual habit.

Shaw's earliest collection of plays, published in 1898, was entitled "Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant." The "Unpleasant Plays" were "Widowers' Houses," "The

Philanderer," and "Mrs. Warren's Profession." In the first a purely economic issue is presented through the person of Dr. Trench, who upon learning that his fiancée, Blanche Sartorius, derives her income from a vicious rent-system, refuses to marry her, only to find shortly after that his own income flows from the same source. He succumbs to the system, of which he is really a product, and agrees in the end to become the husband of Blanche. "The Philanderer" exposes the mock-modern man and woman to bitter contempt, and analyzes relentlessly the relations of lovers in any society. An Ibsen Club has been formed whose members are prohibited from thinking and talking conventionally; radicalism is abandoned, however, as soon as it fails to secure for its exponents the particular thing that their passions desire. The moral is not that such persons are too radical, but that they are not radical enough—that they neglect to make over their whole lives on a sensible and intelligent scheme. "Mrs. Warren's Profession" was the first of Shaw's plays to show parents in conflict with children. Vivie Warren, finding that her mother is engaged in a loathsome occupation, and resenting the fact that she is dependent upon her, throws her over and goes to seek her own fortune in London by work. In reply to Mrs. Warren's declaration of maternal love, she insists that such love in the present case is an indecent thing, and Mrs. Warren is left exclaiming, "Lord help the world if everybody took to doing the right thing!"

Among the "Pleasant Plays," "You Never Can Tell" again attempts to dispose of the theory that there is anything sacred in the affection of parents for children, and with a good deal of levity presents the conflict in the minds of two young people between their love for each other and their self-respect. Shaw is particularly fond of strong-minded persons who resist love as long as they

are able; the implication being that other concerns in life are of equal or greater importance. "Arms and the Man" is a merry account of a soldier who is so much superior to his profession as to have imagination and a sense of humor. He never pretends that he is brave, but through mere frankness and wit he manages to get what he wants; he defeats by ridicule a pompous and pretentious soldier whom Shaw represents as typical of the profession, and wins the adoration of a romantic lady through refusing to be impressed by her "noble attitude" and "thrilling voice." In "Candida" the inflated personality of the Rev. James Morell is punctured by his wife Candida's declaration at the end that he is weaker than a certain neurotic poet who also loves her, and that therefore she must send the poet away and remain at home to protect Morell. He has always thought of himself as her protector, whereas like many large men with vague ideas he is a helpless baby in the hands of a spirited and genuinely good woman. "The Man of Destiny" similarly deflates the character of Napoleon by showing him to be a man of ridiculously small vanity who no more is under the guidance of a star than the least of his soldiers is.

Shaw's next volume, called "Three Plays for Puritans" (1900), contained three attempts to correct popular misimpressions of heroic motive. "The Devil's Disciple," a melodrama of the American Revolution, rebukes those theater-goers who suppose that when a man sacrifices himself in the interests of a woman he does it always because he loves her; Dick Dudgeon offers himself to be hanged in place of the preacher Anderson because his nature at the moment prompts him to do so, and for no other reason. Incidentally there is more satire on soldiery in the speeches of the attractive General Burgoyne. "Cæsar and Cleopatra" is a vindication of the character of Julius Cæsar against the aspersions of Shak-

spere's Roman heroes, and a revelation of what Shaw takes to be the great man's genuine intellectual processes. Shaw's Cæsar is witty, and he never glosses over his actions with large, loose phrases designed to justify them on moral grounds. He happens to be a strong man, and his philosophy, of which Shaw approves, is to do what he likes. Most people, the implication is, are feeble because they do not know what they like. "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" is a study of the motive of revenge. Captain Brassbound, under the clever management of Lady Cicely Waynefleet, is forced to admit that his mother, whom he has been waiting years in the solitude of Africa to avenge upon his uncle, as a matter of fact was not worth avenging; and thereby is transformed from an angry, sulking simpleton to a reasonable human animal.

Shaw's masterpiece is "Man and Superman" (1903). This play is one of the great works of the twentieth century, not only because it is the best expression of perhaps its chief writer, but because it contains in one form or another most of the ideas that are distinctively modern, and conveys them with unexampled brillance. The hero is John Tanner, an impetuous and eloquent socialist who is running over with ideas about everything, from love to economics. Shaw pours himself out through Tanner and other characters, until the play becomes a veritable encyclopedia of contemporary wit and wisdom, with not a little absurdity mixed in. Tanner's chief theory, and the theory for which "Man and Superman" is famous, is that marriage is the most dangerous enemy of men. A strong man has other things to do than surrender himself to love, and particularly to a family; he must think, and he must live; he must be free. Yet sooner or later woman, whose business it is in nature to pursue him and subdue him, will prevail, and he will fall.

The very life force which stimulates his intellectual ambition dictates that he shall marry and reproduce his genius. Tanner spends most of his time fleeing Ann Whitefield, who loves him and whom in spite of his denials he loves. In the end he succumbs, and the audience leaves him despairingly orating upon the misery of his fate and upon the sort of man that he hopes to remain in spite of the fact that he has been humbled. This interpretation of the relations between men and women is not original with Shaw. The shrewdest observers of all times—and Shaw must admit Shakspere among their number—have subscribed to it, and several nineteenth-century philosophers in Europe made much of it. Shaw's contribution was that of a dramatist and a humorist, and perhaps "Man and Superman" will continue to be its classic expression. In the middle of the play there is a long interlude the scene of which is hell, and the principal actor in which is Don Juan, who is only John Tanner transformed. "Man and Superman" thus connects itself with a great tradition of literature, the diabolic; and the discussion in this scene of all subjects under the sun takes its place alongside the most interesting philosophical writing in English.

"John Bull's Other Island," the next play in point of time, is a study of the English and Irish national temperaments, with the defects of both conspicuously set forth. In "How He Lied to Her Husband" Shaw tries to draw the eternal triangle according to a new geometry; he proposes to show how real people, not stage people, might act in a certain hackneyed situation. A man who has been writing poetry to the wife of another man lies when the poetry is discovered by the husband and says he does not love the wife. The husband is indignant that any man should not love his wife, and offers to fight; but on the other's assurance that he does love

her indeed the husband desists and is happy. "Major Barbara" contains another specimen of Shaw's strong man in Andrew Undershaft, who, although his profession of munition-maker is distasteful to his exceedingly Christian daughter Barbara, at last convinces her that there is more life in his single will than in all of the Salvation Army, to which she has fancied herself devoted. This is Shaw's protest against weak-kneed and sentimental Christianity, and particularly against the doctrine that poverty is in any way a holy thing. "The Doctor's Dilemma" relieves Shaw of all his animus against the medical profession, which he distrusts as much as Molière distrusted it. "Getting Married" is little more than a symposium on the institutions of marriage and divorce. "The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet" takes place in the southwestern part of the United States, and is in effect a commentary upon the fact that goodness as conventionally practised is felt to be a shameful thing. Blanco has done a difficult and noble deed in sacrificing himself for a woman and her sick child, but he has been so accustomed to despising the good people of his town that he cannot approve of himself until a crisis forces him into an admission that it is better to be a good man than a bad one. "Misalliance" and "Fanny's First Play" are pictures of the younger generation asserting itself, the second of the two being introduced and concluded by some critical dialogue which again reminds the reader of Molière, who was fond of representing the critics in conference about himself. "Androcles and the Lion" makes uproarious fun of martyrs and of all Christians whose religion does not have what Shaw would call a natural basis. The scene is Rome in the time of the persecutions, and the lion which Androcles meets in the arena, only to recognize him as the beast from whose paw he once had extracted a thorn, is certainly one of the most comical

characters to be found in any English play. In "Pygmalion" Professor Higgins the philologist takes a young cockney girl into his house in order to test a theory he has that he can make a lady out of any girl by teaching her to speak like one. He does so to his satisfaction, and stops there; Shaw takes the pains to prevent him from falling in love with Liza, as any professor would have done in almost any other play.

After these plays came the World War, and Shaw, with the exception of a few "playlets," was silent until 1917, when "Heartbreak House" appeared. The piece is accurately named, for in it Shaw registers once and for all his doubts that English society will ever reach an understanding of itself; Heartbreak House is England, and attractive as many of its inhabitants may be, divinely as a few of them can talk, it is a house of cross-purposes and degenerate idleness. Shaw in this play, which he wrote at sixty, was more mellow and more amusing than he had ever been before, and in addition he was more of a poet. He has rarely been accused of poetry, but there is a surprising undercurrent of mysticism here, and there is a certain character, old Captain Shotover, who by his indefinable, gruff charm entitles the playwright to a place among the most magical members of his craft. The mark of a genuine dramatic character is that he seems to have a life independent of the author's will—that he speaks out of his own past, and creates his own future as the play progresses. Captain Shotover is such a person, and he is one of the very few of his sort in Shaw's whole work. Many of Shaw's people are Shaw himself in one form or other; Shotover is Shotover, as Falstaff is Falstaff.

Three years later Shaw astonished the world with a play which was much the longest that he had yet composed, and much the most ambitious. "Back to Methu-

selah" is really five plays in one, being a survey in five settings of the development of man as a biological specimen. The first scene is the Garden of Eden where the parents of the race discover error and death, their two chief enemies. The second is England at the present time; two scientists, the Brothers Barnabas, are perfecting a philosophy which encourages them to believe that in the future men by willing it may prolong their lives to three hundred years—that being the estimate of Shaw as to the length of time which would actually be necessary for a human being to outgrow the childishness of the best civilization to date and become in any profound sense mature. In 2170 A. D. "The Thing Happens," and by 3000 A. D. England has already become an island whereon only "normal" people are allowed to live, the "short-lived" being banished to Bagdad. The "normal" people are flawlessly intelligent, and an occasional visitor from Bagdad must struggle to avoid the deepest humiliation in their presence. Finally, in the year 31,920 A. D., there are no more short-lived people. Certain incredibly wise "ancients" walk about, enjoying the world as only pure mind can enjoy it; children are hatched from eggs full-grown; there is no useless passion any more, no error, no war, no love, no sensual art. The Golden Age has arrived, and Shaw in the prospect of it is at last a happy man. The wealth and the wit of this gigantic play can only be hinted at. It disputes with "Man and Superman" the right to be considered Shaw's masterpiece, and it belongs without a question with the finest literature of the first quarter of the twentieth century. It is not merely a protest against the stupidity of the recent war; it is an enduring protest against the indolence of the mind of man. It is the quintessence of the older Shaw, and it may turn out to be the Bible of many generations to come.

After four more years of silence so far as the stage was concerned, Shaw produced "Saint Joan" in New York, and demonstrated in a new way his ability to speak with beauty and power upon themes of universal importance to the human mind. "Saint Joan" is Shaw's version of the life of the Maid of Orleans, Jeanne d'Arc. Voltaire, Anatole France, and Mark Twain have at various times interpreted this marvelous life to suit themselves. Shaw finds in Joan a perfect expression of the protestant disposition; the disposition to think and feel for oneself, to obey one's inspiration regardless of whether or not the organization of existing society is thereby disturbed. The simple girl of medieval France who comes to court with her wonderful message is in the end crushed out of existence by church and state, neither of which can tolerate the supposition that a private person can know more than properly ordained bishops and kings. The issue is clearest in the fourth act of the play, where with a vividness and a grasp rare in English drama Shaw pits Joan against the Inquisition, met to try her for the heresy of believing that the church is not a necessary intermediary between man and God. Shaw takes pains to make the issue a real one. The officials of the Inquisition are men of intellect and integrity who sincerely feel Joan to be dangerous. Shaw makes his play, therefore, a parable of the eternal conflict between inspiration and organization, between the one and the many, between originality and conformity, between the new and the old. In addition he paints a touching and beautiful picture of Saint Joan, and he contributes to English drama one or two of its mightiest tragic scenes.

Galsworthy 1867–

The stamp of Ibsen is perhaps more obvious on a playwright like John Galsworthy than it is on Shaw; though it is not so deep. The plays of Galsworthy, like the maturer plays of Ibsen, are

judicial, controlled, and rather bitterly lacking in warm humor. Shaw in many cases has let his nature run away with him—has preached when he was morally indignant or excited, has played the buffoon when he was in high spirits. Nothing has ever ruffled the smooth mind of Galsworthy. A highly competent technician, he has usually written plays which are more perfect than Shaw's; but none of them is as great because none of them is saturated with as important a personality.

Galsworthy was educated to be a lawyer, and there is something legal about the extreme care with which he has presented his cases. For in practically every play there is a case. Galsworthy has a sensitive mind. He is finely aware of the misery existing in the world, and his analysis of its causes is generally subtle and just. But the reader or the spectator is never permitted to forget that an analysis is going on. The playwright does not seem to be lost in this or that person, in this or that terrible wrong. Always conscious of himself, always employing the most excellent dramatic devices and drawing upon the most serene sources of his intellect, he becomes impressive chiefly for his skill. There is little abandon in his soul, and hence there is little poetry. Ibsen in a sense was a great poet, and, contrary to the popular notion, so is Shaw. Galsworthy is a civilized man and a master of letters; he is not a force.

His ideas are simple and few. Injustice is a painful superfluity in the world, caused by blind passion and curable by reason. Justice, peace, and freedom are beautiful, and they are attainable by all who will live humanely. The perfect state would be one in which each individual was at liberty to pursue his ideal of the comely life unhampered by the jealousy or the ignorance of his neighbors. Prejudice is a detestable thing, and love—free, devoted, generous—is the profoundest of blessings.

Galsworthy's method as a dramatist has been to select a simple, concrete situation in life and treat it dispassionately though sympathetically in the light of these convictions. He believes that out of every truly human relationship, when scrutinized by a refined imagination, a moral rises; his aim is to imply—not necessarily to point—that moral. His sophistication as an artist saves him from being didactic or sentimental. He proceeds with admirable caution to build a structure upon the original germ of fact which shall have both significance and beauty. The very simplicity of the result is often deceptive, especially for inexperienced readers. Such a reader is likely to think that the achievement was an easy one—that in fact very little has been achieved. Further acquaintance with literature will make it clear how excellent a writer Galsworthy is.

He did not begin to write plays until he had worked at fiction[1] for ten years. "The Silver Box" (1906), his first play, is concerned with an idea which has found frequent expression in later pieces—the idea that the justice of the world exacts a greater penalty from the poor than it does from the rich. A rich young gentleman has stolen a purse while drunk. A poor man steals it in turn while he is drunk. The poor man is sentenced to prison; the gentleman escapes with nothing worse than a scare, and the fear on the part of his family that there will be scandal. Somewhat the same issue is presented in "The Eldest Son," a much subtler play, and one in which the moral is not so badly exposed. In a certain wealthy household a manservant has seduced a womanservant, and thereby has incurred the contempt of all the family. Soon, however, it becomes known that the eldest son of the family has seduced one of the maids. Now the situation is assumed to be different. In spite

[1] For his novels, see pages 198–205.

of the fact that the son is honorable and proposes marriage, pressure is brought upon him to keep the secret. He still refuses, and a solution is reached only when the maid declines an offer which has the taint of charity about it. Charity never fares so well in Galsworthy as love. Galsworthy's most famous and effective treatment of human cruelty is "Justice" (1910), in which William Falder, a lawyer's clerk, is punished out of all proportion to his crime (forgery) because his employer, James Howe, wishes to make an example of him; that is, wishes to take the sternest possible precautions against the chance that his property shall ever be tampered with again. The prison scene, with Falder pounding on the door of his cell, and the final scene, where he leaves the lawyer's office to commit suicide, are justly celebrated. Galsworthy has nowhere else come so near to authentic tragedy.

Galsworthy has been much interested in the phenomenon of an individual crushed by the majority. Stephen More in "The Mob," like Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People," has taken the unpopular side in an important public issue—in this case a war. As he proceeds to defend the rights of the small nation which is being victimized by his own government, his family deserts him one by one, and the mob, after attacking him on the streets, breaks into his house and kills him. Clare Dedmond in "The Fugitive," failing to get the sympathy from her friends which she deserves in her effort to live away from her unsuitable husband, is reduced to despair and takes her own life in a mean restaurant on the day of a big race. Her predicament is interesting among other reasons for its parallel with that of Irene Forsyte, the heroine of Galsworthy's masterpiece in fiction, "The Forsyte Saga."

Among all the conflicts which Galsworthy is pained to

observe in contemporary life, none is more distressful to him than the conflict between groups or classes of people. One of his earlier plays, "Strife," was concerned with a great strike which had persisted in a northern factory town for months longer than was necessary because of the stubbornness of the two men who led the opposing parties. The war is not ended until Roberts, representing the union, has seen his wife die of starvation, and Anthony, the president of the directors, has physically broken down. Then by an irony which Galsworthy is careful not to make too apparent, a settlement is put into effect which all except the leaders had agreed upon before the personal feud began. "The Skin Game" shows two families, socially jealous of each other, fighting with every kind of weapon, scrupulous and unscrupulous, until the spirit of each is shattered and victory means nothing in either case. "Loyalties" shows two groups opposing each other to the death. When De Levis, a wealthy Jew, accuses Dancy, a Gentile, of stealing some money from under his pillow in a country-house, the club-friends of Dancy rally to his support against an alien race. De Levis, fighting for that race, pushes the investigation until Dancy's guilt is exposed, and Dancy shoots himself. It has been supposed that Galsworthy took sides in this play, but there is no evidence that he did so. He was interested merely in the deadlock, and regretful that life should be marred by passions so destructive of courtesy and truth.

Galsworthy as a dramatist is perhaps more narrowly a man of his own time than either Wilde, who can claim the company of Congreve, or Shaw, who belongs with the foremost satirists in his language—Swift and Fielding—and indeed with the great humorists of all time—Aristophanes, Cervantes, and Molière. Rarely if ever do mere reasonableness of mind and mere perfection of

style guarantee enduring fame. But Galsworthy has filled a very useful place in contemporary English drama, and he has performed excellent service in securing for his art the respectable position which for more than a hundred years it had lost. Within his generation he is extremely significant; if he is not among the greatest he is among those who most deserve to be read.

Barrie 1860–

Nothing so solemn as a problem, whether of society or of the individual, has ever been the concern of Sir James Matthew Barrie, perhaps the most popular of living British playwrights. This engaging Scotchman abandoned the writing of fiction [1] about the beginning of the present century and has devoted himself to the drama ever since, with varying success but with constant delicacy and charm. He has never been accused of having "ideas," and he rarely has been considered important by the more serious critics. He could never have said like Shaw, for instance, that "in all my plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michael Angelo"; or like Galsworthy that "'The Moral' is the keynote of all drama." His apparent aim has been first of all to amuse or touch his audiences, and after that to play as his fancy suited him upon the minor strings of the human instrument. Few playwrights have been defter in avoiding the ridiculous, and few have shown more clearly that they were not intended for the sublime. He occupies the middle ground of sentiment rather than the upper or lower reaches of passion.

When Barrie has not definitely deserted reality and entered fairy-land, as in his best-known play for children, "Peter Pan" (1904), he has contented himself with decorating the fringes of human character. He has ex-

[1] For his prose fiction, see pages 169–171.

ploited pathos instead of tragedy, absurdity instead of error, affectation instead of villainy. He has maintained an excellent temper into which nothing morose or morbid has been allowed to intrude. He has earned from almost every commentator the adjectives "whimsical," "quaint," "elfish," and "capricious," and indeed he has cultivated such qualities to the point where he is dangerously near ruin on the rocks of sentimentality. But he has preserved himself through an ever-present humor, which, though at times it may be trivial or complacent, is always a thing of the mind, and always something just beyond critical analysis.

His favorite situation is one in which a character gets on bravely and cheerfully in spite of some handicap of circumstance or of character, and from having only the sympathy of the audience at the start ends by winning its love or loyalty. He is fond of old maids who cherish a secret charm, poor children who make touching attempts to be happy on the grand scale, women who do not like to admit that they are ceasing to be girls, commonplace persons of any sort who at heart are extraordinary. Upon such material he can lavish his resources of gay or wistful irony; by developing such contrasts with the unusual skill which he has he can reach that corner of each spectator's mind where tears and laughter dance hand in hand. Many who in their sterner, more exacting moments would disapprove of Barrie's methods find themselves quite disarmed by them once they are sitting in the theater. For he is a highly capable artist, and can in most cases accomplish what he sets out to accomplish.

Two of Barrie's most successful plays, "The Little Minister" and "Peter Pan," have been dramatized from his novels—the second from "The Little White Bird." Of the others, "Quality Street" early set the tone which

was to become so familiar both in Great Britain and in America. Susan and Phoebe Throssel are two timid spinsters in the time of the Napoleonic Wars who attract the attention of a gentleman, Valentine Brown, just as he is about to leave and enlist. When he returns ten years later, Phoebe, who once fancied that he loved her, has become a school-teacher, and at his first glance she seems too old for him. Piqued by his betrayal of disappointment, she disguises herself as a niece and charms him with her youthfulness, only in the end to discover that he prefers her as she really is. The author's management of the disguise, and of the ball-room scene where it is momentarily successful, carries "quaintness" to an almost objectionable limit; but wit and ingenuity prevent the whole, as often with Barrie, from becoming maudlin or embarrassing.

In "The Admirable Crichton" Barrie skirts the edge of something which in Galsworthy would be a problem —the problem of the relations between social classes. Crichton is the butler in a wealthy household whose head, Lord Loam, likes to pretend that all human beings are equal, and who accordingly once a year entertains his servants at tea. Crichton, believing firmly that such an arrangement violates the laws of nature, resists without avail until during a yachting trip the family is wrecked on a desert island and left there for two years. Now the situation is different. Now the laws of nature dictate that the most competent member of the party shall be head, and since this is Crichton he cheerfully assumes responsibility, reducing the others to the position of slaves. When rescue comes, however, and England is reached again, Crichton punctiliously restores the old balance, and life goes on as it always had. There is not a moment of seriousness in the play; all is done in the spirit of extravagant burlesque, and so Barrie evades the only

charge which might be brought against him of taking society seriously.

"What Every Woman Knows" is a tribute to all plain little wives who get less than their due from their husbands. Maggie Shand is in reality the brains of her house, but John, a member of Parliament, whose pompous speeches she improves when she copies them, does not discover this as soon as the audience does. Hence the suspense of the spectators, and hence once more the emergence of obscure virtue from unlikely places. "A Kiss for Cinderella" is exactly the piece which it might have been predicted that Barrie would write, for the Cinderella legend lies always in the back of his mind. In this case a young cockney girl is allowed to dream of a paradise in which she should be a triumphant princess. The dream is made material on the stage, and proves to be as laughable as it is wistful. Barrie appeals with especial force to all who day-dream; few do not. "The Twelve-Pound Look" is unique among Barrie's plays as recalling in some measure the convictions of Shaw with regard to the position of women in society. Sir Harry Sims is a solemn, possessive husband whose first wife has tired of the routine of domestic idleness and left him to take a job as typist. She returns by chance and warns him against the possibility that his second wife shall begin to have the "twelve-pound look"—that is, shall begin to lay by twelve pounds as a competency on which she can desert him in order to make an independent living. He is not convinced, but in a later scene the audience thinks it catches the look in the new wife's eyes, and suspects that soon again he will be alone in his pride.

Possibly the best of Barrie's plays is "Dear Brutus" (1917), produced during the war but in no way concerned with it. The theme and the setting have more than a touch of the weirdness and other-worldliness which

the playwright's fancy has tended to embrace with greater warmth each year. On Midsummer eve a party of ladies and gentlemen come as guests to the house of an indeterminate old fellow named Lob, who encourages them after dinner to stroll out into the night. Pair by pair they reach the door and are astonished to see a vast wood extending where before was open ground. But they proceed, are stricken with midsummer wisdom, and for a few hours at least live the lives which character and circumstances have thwarted them from living in the light of common day. In particular a certain Mr. Dearth, who has been cursed with childlessness, finds a winning daughter in the wood and chats most pleasantly with her until it is time to return to reality. When he does so, and understands what he has enjoyed only to lose, he is a pitiable man, though one who it is implied will be subtly changed for the better by virtue of his experience. So with all the others, though Barrie is too sensible to let it be understood that a complete reformation has been worked in any case. Here, as often, he has suggested more than he has said; he has led his audience to the verge of an unjustified emotion, and then before it was too late —but only just before—has withheld them from the leap with light laughter shining through tears. He has not always done this, and when he has not done it he has failed to be a writer worthy of deep respect.

Hardy 1840–

If Shaw and Galsworthy have woven the main pattern of contemporary British drama, and Barrie has worked the fringe, Thomas Hardy [1] remains entirely outside of the design with his lone masterpiece, "The Dynasts" (1904–1908). This play is remarkable in the present generation first because it is poetry. For one reason or another the poetic drama has not flourished in the twentieth century, although there

[1] For his poems, see pages 144–148.

have been isolated examples of genuine, minor excellence. In the greatest periods of its literary history the drama has been both poetic and popular. Poetry of no sort is popular to-day in the important sense that prose fiction is popular, and verse plays especially lack that kind of force which compels universal attention. Hardy is almost unique, then, in the form which he has given to his language. But he is even more extraordinary in the form which he has given to his material, and in the scope which his ambitions have led him to conceive. In mere size "The Dynasts" permits nothing to be compared with it except Shaw's "Back to Methuselah"; and incidentally a great deal could be said for the opinion that those two dramas are the giants of their generation. But whereas Shaw's perspective has been scientific and philosophical, Hardy's, at least on the surface, has been historical. "The Dynasts" is a history of the ten years in Europe between 1805 and 1815, and the central figure is, of course, Napoleon. Here another comparison suggests itself—a comparison with Tolstoy's great novel in three volumes, "War and Peace," covering the same ground in point of time and place. But the concern of the famous Russian was different from Hardy's, as that of any one else must necessarily have been.

The nature of "The Dynasts" may partially be deduced from the sub-title: "An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes." Hardy has presented a panorama of mighty sweep—a sweep quite beyond the limits of stage artifice, a sweep which makes the poem fit only for "mental performance." On a certain occasion a few speeches were selected from the mammoth text and recited on a London stage; but the effect of the whole is one that can be wrought only upon the mind's eye. The mind's eye must travel in an instant from England to

France, from France to Italy, from Italy to Germany, from Germany to Russia, from Russia back to an English village; and indeed there are moments when the continent of Europe becomes visible as an entity, as in the following stage-direction: "The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the north of France across Russia like a grey-green garment hemmed by the Ural mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean. The point of view then sinks downwards through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities." When the first terrestrial scene is presented at close hand, therefore, and a stage-coach appears upon an English highway along the sea, the voices of the people within, "after the foregoing, sound small and commonplace, as from another medium."

It is this alternation between the near and the far view which gives to the action of the piece its uncanny significance. For Hardy has endeavored to see the Napoleonic years as a tragic unit, an episode in the life of man susceptible to special treatment as revealing all that is pitiful for Hardy in that life. Hardy conceives the war to have been an unrelieved calamity for which no single nation and no single man—not even Napoleon—was responsible. The spectacle which presents itself is rather a vast network of error growing more complex and inescapable each year only because fate persists in her attitude of indifference or even contempt toward the human race. To give voice to this view Hardy has invented a group of Phantom Intelligences—the Ancient

Spirit of the Years, the Chorus of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Chorus of the Pities, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, the Choruses of Sinister and Ironic Spirits, the Spirit of Rumor, the Chorus of Rumors, the Shade of the Earth, Spirit-Messengers, and Recording Angels—who from regions far above the earth look down and comment from time to time upon the conduct of the persons involved. The comment of these spirits is the comment of Hardy himself, and in every respect it is consistent with the philosophy which he has expressed in his fiction and his poetry. It is comment of the most grandly poetical sort, and it contains some of the greatest writing of the twentieth century—writing comparable with that of Æschylus in Greece and with that of Milton in an older England. Yet it in no way suggests that Æschylus and Milton have been imitated. Æschylus, like Homer, peopled his sky with gods; Milton filled the universe with falling devils and soaring angels; Hardy, in another age, has had to be content with intellectual abstractions to which he could give no other human attribute than voice. For the gods no longer have shapes like men; they are remote, dwelling in the realm of pure, disembodied ideas.

The largeness of Hardy's perspective lends more than a philosophical significance to the action as a whole. It lends an unexampled reality to the various parts. When the mists finally clear away, each scene, each army, each individual, becomes terribly clear by virtue of the fact that a gaze so comprehensive and so earnest has been momentarily concentrated thereupon. An incident becomes actual because its meaning, or perhaps its lack of meaning, has been so indelibly impressed upon the reader. No one character fully realizes the importance of what he does; the reader, in the capacity of divine spectator, realizes everything, as God would if he looked at men.

There are literally hundreds of speakers, and if the armies be taken into account, literally hundreds of thousands of human beings. But there is no confusion in the mind of the audience, however much there may be upon the physical stage. After the play is over the reader remembers with ease, as if he had been actually upon the ground, dozens of scenes—Pitt in the picture-gallery, receiving the news of Austerlitz; Pitt on his death-bed; the peasants along the English coast guarding with their beacons against a rumored invasion by Napoleon himself, and comically solemn in the consciousness of their responsibility; the courts of Russia and Germany, splendid with gold and silk and humming with intrigue; Napoleon with Josephine, and later with Marie Louise; the ghastly winter at Moscow, with Frenchmen lying frozen around the remains of camp-fires; the ball-room at Brussels, just before the order comes to arm for Waterloo; Waterloo itself, with Napoleon reduced to despair and the armies charging in their respective sectors; the Peninsular Campaign, with fields full of struggling men and barns inhabited by sleeping or drunken soldiers; Nelson mortally wounded at Trafalgar; the death of George III; the English Prince Regent revoltingly indifferent to the news of George's death; the final defeat of Napoleon; and his escape from Waterloo through lonely woods.

Not the least interesting thing about "The Dynasts" is the story of its growth in the poet's mind. Hardy himself tells how as a boy, living on that portion of the English coast where tradition long persisted that Napoleon came in person one dark night and reconnoitered, he was seized with an insatiable curiosity concerning all things connected either with Napoleon or with the wars that he waged. When he grew up and became a writer he treated one aspect or another of the subject in short stories, in poems, and in a novel—"The Trumpet Major."

But still the subject eluded him because it was so big. At last, when he had closed his career as a novelist, he settled down to researches of a comprehensive sort and in eleven years completed one of the most ambitious and at the same time one of the most successful literary ventures ever undertaken by an ancient or a modern man. Thus two great English dramas of the twentieth century, "The Dynasts" and "Back to Methuselah," are seen to be what great dramas have almost always been, works of a long and gradual growth, the growth indeed of a lifetime.

CHAPTER IV

ESSAYISTS

STRICTLY speaking, there is no body of English prose to-day which conforms to the traditional rules of the essay. There is a great wealth of miscellaneous writing by philosophers, historians, critics, economists, and humorists; yet the profession of essayist as such can hardly be said to exist. A writer who sits down at his desk with something specific to say in the twentieth century is more likely to call his product an article than he is to claim for it the artistic distinction of being an essay, thus implying that his subject is of more significance than his personality. Of the six authors considered in the present chapter, one is a caricaturist and satirist first of all, three have consistent theories about society which they wish to expound, one is a naturalist, and one is a biographer.

Beerbohm 1872–

Max Beerbohm is the only surviving writer who carries over to present times the full flavor of the eighteen-nineties. He was one of the cleverest members of that extremely clever and sophisticated group which contained Oscar Wilde and the illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, and it might have been supposed that with the new century he would wither as most of the fine flowers of his decade did. But he was saved by the fact that he was a wit; he never had taken his generation too seriously. Indeed, in a manner quite his own, he had been its satirist. He had been in the

nineties, but not irretrievably of them. He had loved dandyism—the metropolitan elegance of irresponsible gentleman and wits—but he had known how to take it off in caricature. Himself a fastidious artist in everything, he yet had seen the ludicrous side of the esthetic movement, and had made gentle fun of it. When, at the not very advanced age of twenty-four, he collected the best of the essays which he had been contributing to periodicals characteristic of the time, he already foresaw the end of his generation, and affected to believe that his end also had come. He called his first book "The Works of Max Beerbohm" (1896), and closed it with a facetious, inimitable sketch in which he bade farewell. "Already I feel myself to be a trifle outmoded. I belong to the Beardsley period. . . . Indeed, I stand aside with no regret. For to be outmoded is to be a classic, if one has written well." This sketch, entitled "Diminuendo," is famous, as are several other pieces in the "Works." "The Pervasion of Rouge" he had written at Oxford, under the title "A Defence of Cosmetics"; it is a half-serious, half-comic plea for artifice in civilization. "Dandies and Dandies" glorifies Beau Brummel, the supreme dandy of all times, and "1880" is a history, with all the apparatus of formal history, of the esthetic movement. "1880" is unsparing of its subject, and is altogether a delicious piece of raillery; yet it would be difficult to determine just where the author's sympathy gives way to his satire. This is true of all his work; it is never obviously one thing rather than another, but is compounded of many elements furnished by his delicately imaginative temperament.

The next year Beerbohm published "a Fairy Tale for Tired Man" which he called "The Happy Hypocrite." This is beautiful in its own light, mocking way, but it is essentially a parody of the fantastic, pseudo-moral tales

which Oscar Wilde and others had written during the eighties and nineties. Sir George Hell is a very bad man with a very evil face who is saved by his love for Jenny Mere, in whose company he wears a mask of goodness and goes by the name of Sir George Heaven, until one day when his mask is torn off he discovers that his real face has become angelic. Beerbohm followed this by "More," the reference in the title being to the original "Works." The temper of this volume is still that of the earlier book, but there is already a discernible tendency toward a greater range of subject and a greater simplicity of style. The satirist retains all his gift for insinuating that certain things are absurd, but he condescends to treat of popular things, such as bicycles and fire departments.

Ten years passed before he published another volume of essays. In the meantime he was busy drawing caricatures of the most famous of his contemporaries in letters and public life; and for a while he served as dramatic critic. When therefore he came out with a third volume of his collected works under the title "Yet Again" (1909), a new generation offered itself for his satire, and the nineties were dead. Beerbohm, with the agility of genius, landed on his feet; this third volume was better than either of the former two. It played over the surfaces of twentieth-century life with all the old subtlety and all the old power. This is yet truer of the fourth volume, "And Even Now" (1920), which is the funniest of its author's miscellaneous books. The best and most characteristic sketch is "A Clergyman." A study of this would reveal as well as it can be revealed the method of Beerbohm's humor. In the beginning there is nothing more to go on than a short passage from Boswell's life of Johnson in which an unnamed clergyman, venturing to make a remark in Johnson's

company, is squelched by a dogmatic retort and never speaks again. Beerbohm plays upon this hint, building up a more and more elaborate structure of hypothesis concerning the nature and career of the clergyman, until he stands entirely revealed, or rather created, for the amusement and the not too serious sympathy of the reader. Such is Beerbohm's technic—to blow upon a trifling fact or idea until it swells into the dimensions of a swaying, iridescent soap-bubble and finally breaks silently in refined laughter.

This indeed is the secret of the many brilliant caricatures which Beerbohm has drawn of his contemporaries, and which are as well known as his writings to those who value wit for its own sake. The superiority of these caricatures in the last analysis resides in the fact that their artist has imagination enough to seize upon the essential trait in the person to be satirized; then he exaggerates that trait just enough to make his point and to deepen his criticism. It would naturally follow that Beerbohm was gifted as a parodist in literature, and he has proved this by a volume of parodies on contemporary prose writers called "A Christmas Garland." The essential qualities of men like Kipling, Wells, Chesterton, Hardy (in "The Dynasts"), Bennett, Galsworthy, Conrad, Shaw, and George Moore are singled out and enlarged until not only laughter is aroused but materials for criticism of these authors is furnished in abundance. "A Christmas Garland" is perhaps the most brilliant book of its kind in English. The same procedure on a greater scale explains the success of Beerbohm's one novel, "Zuleika Dobson" (1911), a burlesque of Oxford life which many readers call his masterpiece, and which, like the rest of his work, mingles affection for the subject with a clear perception of its occasional absurdity. A rival for the honor of being Beerbohm's masterpiece is

"Seven Men" (1919), a collection of portrait-stories. Only six men are listed in the table of contents; the seventh, presumably, is Beerbohm himself. In his account of at least four of them he returns to the nineties, painting in Enoch Soames, Hilary Maltby, Stephen Braxton, and "Savonarola" Brown the plight of the minor author who flourished then. Soames, eager for fame, and willing to sell his soul for a glimpse of what posterity will think of him, is conducted by the Devil to the library of the British Museum a hundred years hence, only to find that the only reference to him in the catalogue is in a book by Max Beerbohm called "Seven Men." Maltby and Braxton, each the author of one popular book, are furious rivals; Brown spends ten years writing a pitiful play in verse upon Savonarola, and four acts of it are "quoted" by Beerbohm, who of course invented it along with its imaginary author.

Beerbohm has no message to the world other than that of his fastidious common sense. "I am a Tory Anarchist," he says. "I should like every one to go about doing just as he pleased—short of altering any of the things to which I have grown accustomed." His prose is as precise and pure as any in the language, and his wit belongs with the rarest—with that of Shakspere, Congreve, Sterne, and Oscar Wilde.

Shaw 1856–

George Bernard Shaw was beginning to be known in London as a wit at about the same time with Beerbohm. But it did not take the public long to find out that he was what Beerbohm as a dandy could not possibly be, a serious man. The dandiacal humorist never deals with important things; he assumes them, and talks rather about clothes, cosmetics, walking-sticks, operas, or parties. Shaw has lighted the crackling fire of his wit under every significant question of his day in economics, politics, ethics, and art. He has

been a painstaking student of formidable issues; he has dug for facts where other men had only opinions; he has been stern, direct, consistent. His ideas have been discussed in another chapter,[1] in connection with his most important work in literature, his dramas; so that it is necessary here only to indicate where his miscellaneous prose may be found, and what its singular quality is.

It divides itself naturally into three parts: the economic and political pamphlets, the criticism, and the prefaces to the plays. Under the first come the "Fabian Essays" and the "Fabian Tracts" which Shaw wrote as a socialist under the influence of the Fabian Society. These essays, with others which followed in various years on such questions as imperialism, finance, the eight-hour day, and municipal trading, are shrewd and carefully documented expositions of the socialist point of view. In some cases the research was made by other men and Shaw was used only to give the facts a brilliant expression; in all cases, however, the spectacle presents itself of a great and happy genius laboring with the most unpromising material in order to make truth and sanity prevail. Of more general interest, and perhaps of greater importance, have been the pamphlets written during the World War. "Common Sense about the War" (1914), issued soon after the conflict began, shocked a considerable portion of the public merely by virtue of the fact that it was common sense, and indeed for a few years it alienated Shaw's audience from him. The pamphlet was nothing more or less than an attempt to hush up the current talk about the high motives of the Allied statesmen, and to call attention to the real motives behind every policy. The real motive is of any nation in any war, said Shaw, is self-preservation, and so it was in this case; Great Britain was fighting for her prestige, and ultimately for her

[1] For his plays, see pages 220–233.

life. One might think that a good or a bad motive—personally, Shaw wanted Great Britain to survive and prevail—but there was certainly every reason for recognizing it, and every reason against glozing it over with sentimental words about Belgium, a scrap of paper, and the war-lords of Europe. Five years later, when the Peace Conference was about to meet at Versailles, Shaw found no different opinion possible, and wrote a pamphlet which he called "Peace Conference Hints," urging the convened statesmen to be honest and frank in the hope that justice would be best served thus. Shaw's various pamphlets in the department of economics and politics are by no means the least important of his works; they are a guarantee of his sincerity, and they possess not a little of the quality of the fugitive prose written by the greatest pamphleteer in English—Swift, with whom Shaw is often compared.

Shaw's criticism was devoted first to art, then to music, and finally to the drama. In each field he found a more or less neglected master to champion, and he championed him with all the ardor at his command at the same time that he heaped scorn upon weaker artists or upon critical opponents. In painting his hero was Whistler, only then coming into recognition; in music it was Wagner; in the drama it was Ibsen. Shaw is in considerable measure responsible for the fame of these three men in modern England. Wagner he interpreted as a sociologist, a revolutionary whose chief hero, Siegfried, expressed his own passionate views regarding society. Such an interpretation is of course wholly personal with Shaw, and it is extravagant; but in the course of making it, in "The Perfect Wagnerite," he delivered himself brilliantly of many sound pronouncements upon both music and socialism. Ibsen he treated in one of his earliest books, "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," as the destroyer for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of cheap conven-

tions, and as the enemy of all that false idealism which discourages the mind from facing or accepting facts. Shaw continued to talk of Ibsen in articles later collected in two volumes as "Dramatic Opinions and Essays" (1907). No more comprehensive or suggestive dramatic criticism has been published in recent years, for Shaw naturally discusses bad plays as well as good, and so sweeps the whole range of dramatic theory and practice. Incidentally he is unflaggingly witty; and he has much to say about the art of acting which deserves to become classic.

His most important work in the essay, however, and probably his most permanent, is found in the prefaces before the plays. They have been so interesting and so varied that the purchaser of a new play by Shaw is likely to look with as much eagerness to the disquisition at the beginning as to the dialogue which follows. They are generally long, running sometimes to a hundred pages; but they have seldom been called tiresome. They are long not because Shaw does not know how to say things quickly, but because he has so much to say. His restless mind turns up so many ideas by the way that he may seem slow in reaching the point. The fact is that he is making points all along. The subject is always the subject of the play—marriage, the superman, biology, linguistics, Christianity, martyrdom, or whatever is considered by the characters who speak the dialogue. The intellectual discipline behind the writing is great; it moves with great speed and clarity against the errors of the mind which Shaw most despises—fear, hypocrisy, sensuality, stupidity. Yet the result is never merely sober or heavily dogmatic. Shaw is in his highest spirits here. His irony and his contempt cut right and left. His style is sharp and final, with brilliant antitheses and with examples drawn suddenly in from a wide world of reading

and acquaintance. He does not scruple to call names; people are fools, knaves, ignoramuses without qualification. There is no verbiage concealing real motives; there is anger in abundance, and fun, and eloquence; and there is extravagance of statement whenever Shaw is sure that the wisest of his readers will appreciate the extravagance. All in all, these prefaces make up a body of prose which is as pungent and important as any so far in the twentieth century.

Wells 1866–

Just as H. G. Wells began his career in fiction [1] with short stories more or less in the conventional form, so in the other department of his prose he began with essays, and only later developed a style and form of exposition which was perfectly suited to his large purposes. One of his earliest essays, called "Thoughts on Cheapness and Aunt Charlotte," seems in the light of later books to be entirely characteristic of Wells at all periods of his intellectual life. It is a protest against the notion that furniture must be so durable and good that it will last forever and serve posterity as antiques. Wells confesses to a partiality for cheap, ephemeral things which can be used carelessly now and thrown away to-morrow when something different is desired. He looks with favor on the Japanese custom of making a great many articles out of paper; Europe, he says, could well cultivate so free and rational an attitude toward possessions and institutions. Here speaks the philosopher who was to devote the remainder of a busy career to swift intellectual experiment, who was to scheme year after year for a constantly changing society.

In the intervals between the novels which he wrote during the first decade of the twentieth century, Wells poured out six volumes of speculation upon social prob-

[1] For his prose fiction, see pages 181–190.

lems, and it is here, perhaps, that his most interesting prose outside of the fiction may be found. The temper of this writing is very different from that of Shaw upon the same general subject. Whereas Shaw is terse, impatient, and dogmatic, Wells is tentative, skeptical, and smooth. He is as much of a socialist as Shaw, but he is a more comprehensive philosopher. He has never rested content with a single point of view or a single set of prejudices; in successive volumes he has elaborated, qualified, and enlarged his doctrine until certain of his readers have been bewildered. But he has really been consistent, as a swiftly growing plant is consistent. Chesterton once said of Wells, "One can lie awake at night and hear him grow." He has grown in the direction of freedom and common sense; his desire has always been to construct a social philosophy which should take into account every significant impulse of man. "First and Last Things" (1907) is the most cogent of these books, and the one in which Wells's mind can most profitably be studied. It begins with a metaphysical examination of the limits of knowledge and the limits of belief. Wells decides that present classifications of facts and ideas are not binding upon any individual who wishes to think for himself. His will to believe what he likes in the world is supreme. Philosophy is essentially a personal thing, an individual guess as to the composition and purpose of the universe. So while Wells refrains from insisting that other people believe with him, he proceeds to outline his own faith, hoping that many will find that they agree. He feels within himself a powerful sense of society, and therefore calls that sense fundamental in man. The social good is the highest good. Socialism must be an expression not of condescension or of revolution, but of love. One who knows that love is the greatest of all intellectual passions must try to increase the

amount of it in the world; his duty is "to talk, teach, explain, write, lecture, read, and listen." He must endeavor to civilize his species by encouraging men to understand both themselves and one another. There will be no coercion in Wells's ideal state. There will be freedom under order, justice and yet individuality. The new earth will be roomy, a place where salvation will be achieved through social service, and where happiness will consist in the realization of beauty, knowledge, and power. Each person will want the best thing for himself, and nothing will stand in the way of his getting it. Least of all will any force run wild among men; war, which has some technical and disciplinary value, will not be a dangerous plaything in the hands of a child, but will be an instrument for peace and order in the hands of adult philosophers.

Shaw published two pamphlets on the World War; Wells published six books on the war and the peace. As usual, his point of view altered and developed from one volume to the next, though his feeling about the future of peace remained fairly constant. Toward the end of the war, and for a period after it, he—as certain contemporaries put it—discovered God. Casting about for the most vivid and effective means of presenting his conviction that the soul of mankind does progressively desire perfection, he came to the conclusion that that very desire is nothing less than God. He constructed several novels around this position, but he gave it expository expression in "God, the Invisible King." God, according to this book, is a person though He has no body; He is as personal as mankind. He is young, as the future is young; He loves rather than hates; He is courageous; and He is perpetually engaged in a conflict with odds that now and then seem insuperable. In other words, God is not the infinite, omnipotent being of traditional theology,

who cannot change and who cannot grow. He is the heart of man; that is to say, He is on the side of Wells and all others who work desperately to make men more wholly and purely divine.

Wells eventually wished to make a historical approach to his social philosophy. From having urged men's thoughts forward toward a utopian future, he came to a point where he thought it necessary to survey for them the steps in the past through which the race according to his interpretation had advanced in the direction of unity and brotherhood. Once that tendency was clear, the future was safe. So he labored for a long time upon "The Outline of History" (1920), which proved to be of great popular influence and educational value. He rightly maintained that history at present lacks comprehensiveness. This or that period has been exhaustively studied; this or that nation knows itself completely. But what has each contributed to the whole story? It was the whole story which Wells set out to tell, from the point of view of one who was chiefly concerned for the harmony of human elements. He began with the earliest known facts about the earth, millions of years before man appeared. He introduced the first men, living in their caves or on their lakes; and as tribes and nations formed themselves out of savagery, he traced their developments through war, work, religion, politics, and art down to the present day. He treated with contempt most heroes of history who were merely egotists—Alexander and Napoleon for instance—and dwelt longer upon intellectual and moral leaders such as Buddha, Socrates, and Christ. It was no superficial essay that he wrote; he made real researches, and he wove a comprehensive plot out of innumerable data. "The Outline of History" is one of the most ambitious and serviceable of all books ever written with a definite ethical purpose.

Historians in one field and another object to its proportions; all readers join in paying tribute to its purpose. The student of Wells may rightly consider it the grandest manifestation of its author's wide-ranging, liberal imagination.

Chesterton 1874–

G. K. Chesterton is a novelist and poet of rank, but he is most widely known as an essayist. A journalist by profession, turning out weekly articles for newspapers and magazines, he has at one time or another touched upon nearly every subject under the sun, and his manner has been primarily that of a busy journalist—rapid, nervous, and clever. But his cleverness has been more than ordinary cleverness, though it is often dismissed as that by those who do not like his notions. It amounts to a genius for surprising juxtapositions of interesting ideas, a genius for paradox. Chesterton has an agility in logic unparalleled in his generation. He revels in antitheses, distinctions, identities, and absurdities. He argues usually by analogies and examples, though there is likely to be a real idea behind his display of fireworks, and often he is talking the plainest kind of sense. He has a gift for illustration worthy of a great poet; the world is constantly alive for him, and images occur to him naturally from the furthest ends of it. He writes with a perpetual relish for facts; he knows the habits of men and women as a reporter knows them, and he does not forget whatever has once engaged his eyes and ears. He is positive, dogmatic, and sudden in his statements, and seems to find a great deal of fun in speaking extravagantly to an age which has been trained to accept only qualified judgments, to be skeptical about everything. His gospel is the joy of life, and his duty as he sees it is to keep his audience reminded of the possibilities of that joy.

An ardent democrat and a despiser of useless aristoc-

racy, Chesterton is yet the farthest thing from a socialist that could be imagined. Many of his essays have been written in ridicule of the utopianism of Wells and the scientific socialism of the Fabians. Those philosophies spring, he implies, from a pessimistic view of human nature—a view of it as something which is sick, and needs heroic treatment. Human nature is not sick, roars Chesterton; it is healthy and "terribly solid." Sociologists do not understand it because they do not approach it in a sufficiently hearty spirit. They make a survey of society and find many maladjustments; but then they propose "altering the human soul to fit its conditions, instead of altering human conditions to fit the human soul." They are not aware, that is to say, of the primary desires of man—to be free, to be healthy, to be amused, to work at what is congenial, and to own a little property. They forget that society was made for man, and begin to think that man was made for society. Most of all they err in forgetting the infinite variety of human traits. In an essay on William Morris, the socialist-poet of the nineteenth century, Chesterton finds fault with Morris because "he seemed really to believe that men could enjoy a perfectly flat felicity." For Chesterton felicity is an extended landscape with mountains and rivers and valleys, and he has set out with boundless gusto to explore that landscape.

In the course of his exploration he finds many healthy and harmless habits among men which he wishes to defend against the rigid moralists who would reduce the race to a narrow form of behavior. He is moved to indignation against prohibitionists, particularly when they attack beer, which he often, more or less humorously, has championed as the bulwark of English civilization. So with beef, which vegetarians like Shaw refuse to eat. And so with an infinite number of things for which

human beings since the dawn of history have had affection. One of Chesterton's books is characteristically entitled "The Defendant." It is a collection of brief essays pointing out the salutary qualities of cheap fiction, pompous public statues, nonsense in literature, useless information in newspapers, heraldry, and so on. He makes these things out to be at least good for something, and insists that critics not make the mistake of judging them by standards not meant for them. Shilling novels are written to amuse or thrill; amusement and romance are legitimate appetites of the human animal; "Hamlet," therefore, has no business being brought in for comparison. In the introduction to "The Defendant" Chesterton inveighs against the "weird and horrible humility" of people who inveterately call good things bad. He will be the prophet of the earth as it is; he will be an optimist. Prophets have always been optimists in the sense that they have been "indignant, not about the badness of existence, but about the slowness of men in realizing its goodness." The only definitely evil thing in the world at present, he says elsewhere, is the institution of land-holding whereby a few rich men are permitted to gather God's acres into their lonely estates and so deprive most of the people of the natural air and sod.

In "What 's Wrong with the World" Chesterton attempted to say the foregoing in a long and coherent volume; but he gradually reverted to the form of the occasional essay, and indeed it seems obvious that he is better at essays than at books. The titles of the numerous collections into which he has put his best journalistic sketches are in themselves illuminating: "Heretics" (1905), "Orthodoxy," "Tremendous Trifles," "A Miscellany of Men," "All Things Considered," "Alarms and Discursions," "The Uses of Diversity," and "Fancies Versus Fads." The exuberance of these titles is reflected

in the exuberance of the contents. There are essays on the advantages of having one leg, on cheese, on pokers, on running after one's hat, on rhyming, and on a thousand good things of life which as Chesterton examines them come to have an immense significance. He is also an ingenious and entertaining critic of individual men. Tolstoy he condemns, because he over-simplified the human problem; Scott he glorifies for his deathless and opulent romance. As a literary critic Chesterton stands high among his contemporaries for the flashes of his intuition and the vigor of his judgments. He has lavished his genius for comment on Dickens and Shaw. Dickens he defends against the condescending slurs of modern criticism, maintaining that the great Victorian novelist excelled in the variety and richness of his portraiture, and deifying him for his healthy sentiment. Shaw he accuses of puritanism and a too rigid insistence upon the consistency of things, but he praises him for his wit, his intellectual strength, and his very great sincerity. In "The Victorian Age in Literature" (1913) Chesterton passes in review the outstanding writers of the nineteenth century, enlivening his pages on Carlyle, Arnold, Cobbett, Mill, and the rest with epigram, epithet, and paradox, and making distinctions which will be of permanent validity in English criticism.

Hudson 1840 (?)–1922

Naturalists in Great Britain who have also been good writers are comparatively few. The reason seems to be that in most cases the energy required for travel and observation is too great for much to be left over for art. When the combination is fortunate, however, the result is likely to be remarkable; for observation is two-thirds of literature. W. H. Hudson was an observer of the first rank—indeed, of a rank quite his own; and he wrote a peculiarly strong and limpid prose not exactly paralleled by that of any English

author, and matched by that of very few. His observations of men and nature had been made in two hemispheres. Born in South America of American parents, he made public few details of his life. His biography was in his books, he said; the only important things which had happened to him had happened to his mind. "Far Away and Long Ago" (1918), a book which many readers call his masterpiece, is a kind of autobiography. This is a record of all the early impressions which his native pampas had made upon his imagination, and reconstructs the process, as accurately as he could remember it in old age, by which nature had wooed, won, and finally disciplined him into manhood. It is a particularly rich book, being crowded with memories of trees, flowers, weeds, thistles, and forests, of eagles, ostriches, owls, ducks, doves, and smaller birds, of snakes, armadillos, dogs, horses, cattle, and men. Over and above all these details, described as they are by the hand of a master in words, there runs a current of philosophy; Hudson explains the first ecstasy which he felt in the presence of living nature, and the ensuing resolve which he made to devote his life to understanding her, not altogether as a scientist, though he should be that, but as a poet and lover as well.

Circumstances removed him at about thirty to England, where he remained the rest of his long life. He did no successful writing for another ten years or so. Then began the series of books, based at first upon his memories of South America but later turning to the English scene for their subjects, which gradually earned him fame. His first book, "The Purple Land that England Lost," was a long romance of the Argentine, packed with fascinating details about the life of the gaucho, or South American cowboy, and taking the reader through many desperate adventures over the plains. Hudson was to try

his hand at fiction on several occasions, but he was not often successful, and he approached "The Purple Land" only twice, in "Green Mansions" and "Tales of the Pampas." "Green Mansions" created against the southern background which always enchanted his imagination the figure of an ideal creature, half bird and half girl, who was all that a human being can be and more. In its ideal nature the book resembles a less effectual book by Hudson, "A Crystal Age," in which the reader is conducted forward in history thousands of years to look upon a society freed from the muddier elements of superstition, fear, ignorance, and jealous love. "Tales of the Pampas" contains a number of faultless short stories in a form which Hudson found best suited to his temperament, the form of reminiscential episode.

The fact that Hudson occasionally turned aside in fiction to paint an ideal existence suggests the possibility that he was dissatisfied with this one. That is only partially true. He never had any quarrel with those things which he believed to be natural, and nature herself he always loved with an austere love. But most men, and particularly men living in cities, he despised because of the narrowness, coldness, and pettiness of their dispositions. He was not a genial man when it came to men, and he never minced matters. Prehistoric man interested him a great deal and had his respect; for he imagined that the race in dim days long forgotten was a natural race—a collection of human beings who knew the wind and the rain at first hand, and possessed senses as keen and comprehending as those possessed by the finer animals now. Hudson often felt himself to be a lone survivor of this older race, a remnant of this vanished people. "The blue sky," he wrote in "Hampshire Days," "the brown soil beneath, the grass, the trees, the animals, the wind, the rain, and sun, and stars are never strange to me;

for I am in and of and am one of them; and my flesh and the soil are one, and the heat in my blood and in the sunshine are one, and the winds and tempests and my passions are one. I feel the 'strangeness' only with regard to my fellow-men, especially in towns, where they exist in conditions unnatural to me, but congenial to them; where they are seen in numbers and in crowds, in streets and houses, and in all places where they gather together; when I look at them, their pale civilized faces, their clothes, and hear them eagerly talking about things that do not concern me. They are out of my world—the real world. All that they value, and seek and strain after all their lives long, are the merest baubles and childish things; and their ideals are all false, and nothing but by-products, or growths, of the artificial life—little funguses cultivated in heated cellars." He went on to express this hatred in even a more vivid and bitter form. He identified himself with the spirits of those prehistoric men who were buried under a mound on which he sat one day in Hampshire, and who now might be supposed to be looking with contempt toward the neighboring village where modern men lived their "artificial indoor lives." "It is not strange that they fear and hate. I look at them—their dark, pale, furious faces—and think that if they could be visible thus in the daylight, all who came to that spot or passed near it would turn and fly with a terrifying image in their mind which would last to the end of life. But they do not resent my presence, and would not resent it were I permitted to come at last to dwell with them forever. Perhaps they know me for one of their tribe—know that what they feel I feel, would hate what they hate."

Such was the uncompromising attitude of Hudson toward his contemporaries. But most of the time in his books he put this out of mind and attended to the nature

which it was his business to report. His most characteristic books are collections of essays describing walks or other excursions in South America and England. The South American books are built up from notes and from long memory, the consequence of this being that they glow with a far-away beauty. "The Naturalist in La Plata," "Idle Days in Patagonia," and "South American Sketches" contain inimitable pictures of the fauna and flora of the pampas, pictures which alternate with narratives of adventure in the pursuit of difficult truth. The English books in this class are more numerous, and many of them are soberer and more subdued, though they are written with even greater excellence. At least six of them are wholly concerned with birds, which of all animals most kept the devotion of Hudson. "Birds in a Village," "British Birds," "Birds in London," "Birds and Man," "Adventures among Birds," and "Birds in Town and Village" establish Hudson in a position supreme among all men who have observed the feathered world. He liked his birds alive, and hated those collectors who stuffed their specimens in order to write dry monographs about them full of dull Latin words. Hudson knew all this side of ornithology, but he knew in addition the warm, living habits of birds; his mind dwelt among them, in their nests and on the wing.

The rest of his English books dealt with landscapes, quadrupeds, villages, and men, and with birds also upon occasion. For years before his death this tall, silent man with the powerful eyes had walked assiduously through the southern counties of England, avoiding villages when he could, but now and then entering towns and studying the people, the houses, or the churches there with the care with which he studied the wilder things on moor and down. "Nature in Downland," "Hampshire Days," "The Land's End," "Afoot in England," "A

Shepherd's Life," "The Book of a Naturalist," "A Hind in Richmond Park," and "A Traveller in Little Things" contain a great wealth of observation and anecdote concerning not only adders, hawks, badgers, and voles, but shepherds and village wives and children as well. Hudson was a keen judge of men, perhaps because of the very fact that he felt so distant from them; and in spite of his sense of superiority he managed to converse with them most profitably. "A Shepherd's Life," one of his finest books, is largely a series of reports on conversations with an old Wiltshire shepherd, Caleb Bawcombe, concerning his dogs, his wife, and his infinitely long life on the downs. "Hampshire Days" is full of significant judgments upon various southern villages and their inhabitants, whom Hudson had classified much as he would have classified a community of foxes or swallows.

The style of Hudson is the despair of all who attempt either to study or to imitate it. It is perfectly simple to all appearances, yet it accomplishes wonders of illusion on every page. It is rapid, and it is as clear as water. There are few superlatives anywhere in it, but there is always a note of suppressed passion; and when that passion breaks out directly the effect is immeasurable. There are no obvious tricks by which "atmosphere" is built up, yet the atmosphere is there, and always appropriate to the subject. In particular is Hudson an adept at narrative. His best books are strewn with anecdotes. They begin naturally, almost without the reader's realizing that they have begun, and they continue for pages while the reader is absorbed in the action being unfolded. No naturalist has ever described the movements of animals to better effect. Hudson knows how to set the scene without any unnecessary stage-properties; then when the animal appears and begins to feed or look about him it is as if the reader were on the spot himself,

standing as motionless as Hudson always stood, and looking with a quiet intentness that could last three or four days if necessary.

Strachey 1880– The art of the biographical essay, an art practised at various times in England by skilful hands, has been revived in the present generation by a young writer who has made a brilliant reputation on the strength of only four volumes. Lytton Strachey, thitherto known to but a few readers in England as a reviewer and a writer of periodical articles, astonished the public shortly after the World War by a book called "Eminent Victorians." The delight of the readers of this volume was partly over the almost malicious ingenuity with which Strachey exposed the somewhat hypocritical temper of the Victorian mind; but it was even more over the technic of the author as a biographer. It had been virtually forgotten that the art of writing lives could be as entertaining as fiction, and full of as many sharp subtleties. "The art of biography," says Strachey, "seems to have fallen on evil times in England. We have had, it is true, a few masterpieces, but we have never had, like the French, a great biographical tradition. . . . With us, the most delicate and humane of all the branches of the art of writing has been relegated to the journeymen of letters; we do not reflect that it is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as to live one. . . . To preserve, for instance, a becoming brevity —a brevity which excludes everything which is redundant and nothing that is significant—that, surely, is the first duty of the biographer. The second, no less surely, is to maintain his own freedom of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary; it is his business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them." Strachey, true to his profession, has taken pains to understand himself as well as the people whose lives he has

studied. With a condensed and glittering style, and with irony flickering over every page, he analyzed the careers of a famous Roman Catholic bishop, a famous humanitarian and woman, a famous fighter in the wilds of Africa, and a famous schoolmaster. In each case he implied, though he did not state, that a point of view might be taken of the subject less complimentary than that usually taken; he arranged his facts, dug out of heaps upon heaps of original materials, in such a way that the inferences he wished to be made could not be avoided.

Strachey followed "Eminent Victorians" with a volume devoted wholly to Queen Victoria, who now received the same kind of treatment that had been given to her subjects. But the scale was larger. Not only was the queen set forth in all her rather appealing absurdity, but the long procession of notable men and women with whom she had to do filed by the reader in the clear, unforgetable outlines of life. A third book, "Books and Characters," was more miscellaneous, gathering up the best of Strachey's past performances in periodicals. But it contained brilliant sketches of certain French personages of the eighteenth century who were particularly suited to the author's temper. Still later, an early book on "The Landmarks of French Literature" was reprinted; and it became obvious just whence emanated the spirit behind Strachey's incomparable work. He is essentially Gallic in his gifts, as so many novelists, dramatists, and poets have been in modern England; and he furnishes the proper kind of classical note upon which to close a chapter devoted to the finest miscellaneous prose of contemporary Great Britain.

PART THREE

IRISH LITERATURE

IRISH LITERATURE

THE late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have seen the creation of an important body of Irish literature which has its roots in the soil of genuine Irish culture and is an expression of the Irish genius. That this literature is written in the English language rather than in the ancient language of Ireland, Gaelic, does not make it any the less national. Gaelic as a medium for literature has been dead for a considerable period, and still is dead in spite of an attempt in the generation just passing to revive it. Even as a medium for speech it is dying, and there is little likelihood that any distinguished use will be made of it in the future. The new literature has employed English to express for a wider world than would otherwise have been reached the ideals and temper of an exceedingly self-conscious race.

Until the nineteenth century was well under way, Irishmen who wrote in English were scarcely distinguishable from Englishmen. The literary capital for Swift, Goldsmith, and Sheridan was London, just as in recent years it has been for Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, and George Moore. These great writers have contributed preëminently to English literature, and have dealt with universal European themes. The more specifically Irish literature, by evoking the ancient spirit of Ireland, has made her speak for herself before the world, presenting the natural and permanent claims for her culture. The deeds and heroes of that ancient time were best made available for literary purposes by Standish O'Grady,

whose "History of Ireland" (1878–1880) has thrilled the latest generation of poets and dramatists by its color and its impetuosity, and may now be looked back upon as the source of all that is most energetic and beautiful in the new literature. O'Grady explored the voluminous poetical literature of the remote Gaelic past, with its many epics and lays, and recreated for modern readers the brilliant figures of Cuchulain, Conchobar, Queen Maeve, Deirdre, and others, causing them once more to be a possession of the living Irish mind. Cuchulain particularly, the supreme hero, the champion of the knights of the Red Branch of Ulster, the mainstay of King Conchobar and the arch-enemy of Queen Maeve of Connaught, was rendered in glorious terms so that he still is a fruitful subject in Ireland for poems, novels, and plays. Here also was told the great story of Deirdre, the "girl of the sorrows," who, chosen by Conchobar to be his future bride and kept apart from other men in the wilds of the forest, one day met Nasi, one of the three young sons of Usnach, and escaped with him and his brothers to Scotland. The four lived happily abroad for seven years, until Conchobar, sending them word by his innocent old counselor Fergus that they would be pardoned if they returned, slew the three boys upon their return and lost Deirdre through her suicide. These two stories, together with those of the heroes Finn and Oisin, of Diarmuid and Grania, and of Etain, have since become familiar classics, and have furnished the material upon which many poets have based their researches into the Irish genius.

Other materials for a future literature, no less fertile in suggestion and inspiration than those of O'Grady, were furnished by two poets and scholars, George Sigerson and Douglas Hyde, who labored at the close of the nineteenth century to make available the vast body of old bardic

songs and folk-tales of their race. Their translations of these precious pieces were valuable particularly because they preserved the true Gaelic speech-accent, and revealed the possibilities for poetic and dramatic use of an entirely indigenous idiom. Douglas Hyde, in his "Love Songs of Connacht" and his "Religious Songs of Connacht," has been the inspiration of a multitude of later writers who without his aid would never have been able to give a completely national turn to their phrases, to enrich their books with an authentic local flavor. With the subject-matter of Irish epic and folk-lore close at hand, and with a speech already invented, the new generation was able to proceed rapidly and intelligently with a literature which should be profoundly national, whether it took the form of poetry, drama, prose fiction, or essay.

POETRY

Yeats 1865–

One of the contributors to "Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland," a volume which in 1888 announced the entry of a new generation of poets upon the Irish scene, was William Butler Yeats, who with four poems struck a fresh note, not only of artistic perfection but of national personality. Yeats was at that time a young man, but discerning readers at once saw promise in him, and such readers were impressed by his evident absorption in native legendry or fairy lore. The first volume of his own verse, called "The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems," established him in a leading position among contemporary poets. The title-poem went back for its inspiration to the days of Ireland before the dawn of Christianity, the pagan days which Yeats has always loved for their shadowy beauty; and incidentally it

touched upon the whole material of heroic life which he was later to treat in many a poem or many a play. His second volume, "The Countess Cathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics," increased his reputation. He consolidated his supremacy with "The Wind among the Reeds" (1899), in which may now be found most of his very famous poems. "The Wind among the Reeds" was marked by a certain touch of philosophical mysticism which rendered some of the pieces difficult to understand, and in subsequent volumes this tendency toward a misty obscurity has increased. But more recently yet he has developed an austere simplicity, and there can be no doubt that he will continue to write verse of the first quality.

Yeats is now recognized everywhere in the English-speaking world as the chief poetic spokesman of the new Ireland. He is also a playwright and essayist of great importance, but he is supreme only in the field which he first entered. For years, until the appearance in the drama of J. M. Synge, Yeats was easily the leader in his nation's literature, and the principal support of the claim of Ireland that she was artistically independent of England. He has had many imitators both in Ireland and in England; his brooding temperament, by the casual reader rather superficially identified with the Celtic temperament in general, has been influential upon a host of less inspired writers. There is perhaps a touch of artificiality and affectation about even his own work—parodists have not been lacking to point out these weak places—though on the whole he is an excellent artist, and one of the best of the poets who have to be considered in the present book. His limitations—his dreamy, vague languor and his cool, impalpable thought—have been described for all time by his contemporary George William Russell in a critical essay. "For a generation the Irish bards have endeavored to live in a palace of art, in chambers hung

with the embroidered cloths and made dim with pale lights and Druid twilights, and the melodies they most sought for were half soundless. The art of an earlier age began softly, to end its songs with a rhetorical blare of sound. The melodies of the new school began close to the ear and died away in distances of the soul. Even as the prophet of old was warned to take off his shoes because the place he stood on was holy ground, so it seemed for a while in Ireland as if no poet would be accepted unless he left outside the demesnes of poetry that very useful animal, the body, and lost all concern about its habits. He could not enter unless he moved with the light and dreamy footfall of spirit. Mr. Yeats was the chief of this eclectic school, and his poetry at its best is the most beautiful in Irish literature. But there crowded after him a whole horde of verse-writers, who seized the most obvious symbols he used and standardized them, and in their writings one wandered about, gasping for fresh air and sunlight, for the Celtic soul seemed bound for ever by the pale lights of fairyland on the north and by the darkness of forbidden passion on the south, and on the east by the shadowiness of all things human, and on the west by everything that was infinite, without form, and void."

The rarest beauty in the poetry of Yeats consists in the limpid and languorous ease of his lines. Few poets in English have so completely mastered the art of being natural and at the same time precious. The phrases of Yeats flow in delicate, cool curves that suggest the draperies upon the slender bodies of fairy queens. It has been his endeavor, following after the researches of Sigerson and Hyde into the genius of Irish speech, to fabricate an idiom which shall be essentially Irish even though it use English words. In this endeavor he may be said substantially to have succeeded. There is not

a trace of English practicality or English energy in his verse; all is moody and slow, and the prevailing accent is one of unspoiled speech—the speech of a melancholy man who has brooded long upon the ancient beauties of his land. Perhaps the best specimen is his famous poem, "The Lake Isle of Inisfree":

I will arise and go now, and go to Inisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

The tone of Yeats's devotion, whether in love of woman or in love of country, is quiet and pure. He is not always explicit regarding the object of this devotion. Sometimes it seems to be nothing more tangible than the spirit of perfection which he worships under the mystical title of the Rose.

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and old,
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a lumbering cart,
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the wintry mould,
Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,
With the earth and the sky and the water, remade, like a casket of gold,

For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the
deeps of my heart.

The best instance of the tentative, unlilting quality in Yeats's verse is to be found in a brief poem called "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven," in which there is subtle and intricate music yet no positive song.

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The separate lines here have a sound of prose; the whole, however, is poetry of a high order, and poetry of a kind which in recent years has been often attempted by other writers in Ireland, England, and America.

Certain longer poems by Yeats deal with various incidents taken from the heroic history of Ireland, the history recorded by Standish O'Grady. "The Death of Cuchulain" tells how that famous hero, like the father in the Eastern story of Sohrab and Rustum, unwittingly slew his own son in a duel and for penance died fighting the waves of the sea. "The Old Age of Queen Maeve" describes the latter days of Cuchulain's great enemy, after all her wars were over. But these poems, and the others like them, are not more Irish than the simple, disembodied love-poems which Yeats gave to the world in response to his urge toward a new kind of beauty in English verse.

Æ 1867– By general consent George William Russell, who writes always under the pseudonym Æ, ranks next to Yeats among modern Irish poets, some of his admirers indeed preferring him to the better-known "poet of the shadows." Æ has been an impor-

tant leader of the new literary movement as editor, essayist, publisher, and philosopher. A man of singular integrity and beauty of character, he has encouraged the profession of letters in Dublin in many unselfish ways; never, however, in the rôle of narrow nationalist. He early assisted in the formation of a philosophical group in the Irish capital which considered the foundations of a future national literature, and which gave body to the general literary movement. The members of this group were mystics, devoted to theosophic studies and drawn closer each year to the religious speculations of the East. The poems of Æ are prevailingly mystical in tone, being concerned with the "Universal Being" who has nourished their author's mind and imagination through many years. Being an honest and humble mystic, Æ has clung to a single vision; and being less interested in literary effect than Yeats, he has not troubled to search his fancy for fresh symbols by which to express himself. As a consequence his poetry tends toward monotony both of structure and of theme; this monotony irks those readers who do not sympathize with the author's mood, but for others it is a guarantee of sincerity. Few poets have been more sincere than Æ; few have been more profoundly respected. There is a monotony even about his landscapes, the settings of his visions. He confines himself to those hours of the day when time seems merging into eternity—dawn and twilight—and the colors of his skies are the delicately tinted colors of changing moments. The two following poems are typical, both in their spirit and in the fine modulation of their language.

> Still as the holy of holies breathes the vast,
> Within its crystal depths the stars grow dim;
> Fire on the altar of the hills at last
> Burns on the shadowy rim.

Moment that holds all moments; white upon
The verge it trembles; then like mists of flowers
Break from the fairy fountain of the dawn
The hues of many hours.

Thrown downward from that high companionship
Of dreaming inmost heart with inmost heart,
Into the common daily ways I slip
My fire from theirs apart.

Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,
And Night, the dark-blue hunter, followed fast,
Ceaseless pursuit and flight were in the sky,
But the long chase had ceased for us at last.

We watched together while the driven fawn
Hid in the golden thicket of the day.
We, from whose hearts pursuit and flight were gone,
Knew on the hunter's breast her refuge lay.

O'Sullivan 1879–

Among the many younger poets whom Æ has encouraged as friend and editor, Seumas O'Sullivan stands forth as one gifted with extraordinary facility and sweetness of style. Like Æ he is partial to twilight hours, and sensitive to the evanescent beauty that passes with the dying day. Like Æ also he lacks any great variety. But he is a more perfect master of form than Æ; he comes close, in fact, to Yeats in the matter of verbal felicity. "The Starling Lake" will recall the older poet in its limpid cadences:

My sorrow that I am not by the little dún
By the lake of the starlings at Rosses under the hill,
And the larks there, singing over the fields of dew,
Or evening there and the sedges still.
For plain I see now the length of the yellow sand,
And Lissadell far off and its leafy ways,
And the holy mountain whose mighty heart

Gathers into it all the colored days.
My sorrow that I am not by the little dún
By the lake of the starlings at evening when all is still,
And still in whispering sedges the herons stand.
'T is there I would nestle at rest till the quivering moon
Uprose in the golden quiet over the hill.

Colum 1881–

Another protégé of Æ in the early years of the twentieth century was Padraic Colum, a man of remarkable force and originality who on the whole has made a greater reputation as a playwright than as a poet. Yet his one volume of verse, "Wild Earth" (1907), ranks high among the volumes of his contemporaries by virtue of its sterling honesty and its purity of observation. Colum, at present a resident of the United States, was once in close contact with the Irish soil, and drew his strength directly from that. His pictures of peasants at their work, of old women by firesides, of young girls spinning, are notably free from sentimentality; they are almost bare in their truthfulness, and they are wholly independent of any inspiration save personal experience. "A Drover" brings to life a man following his beasts over the hills.

To Meath of the pastures,
From wet hills by the sea,
Through Leitrim and Longford,
Go my cattle and me.

I hear in the darkness
Their slipping and breathing—
I name them the bye-ways
They 're to pass without heeding.

"What the Shuiler Said as She Lay by the Fire in the Farmer's House" realistically enumerates the comforts which an old pauper-woman dreams of having as she nods in the chimney-corner; while several spinning songs with rollicking refrains speak for girls at their daily

labor. An even greater vigor shows in "River Mates," which deals with the king of river animals.

I 'll be an otter, and I 'll let you swim
A mate beside me; we will venture down
A deep, full river when the sky above
Is shut of the sun; spoilers are we:—
Thick-coated: no dog's tooth can bite at our veins,
With ears and eyes of poachers: deep-earthed ones
Turned hunters; let him strike past,—
The little vole; my teeth are on an edge
For the King-Fish of the River!
I hold him up,
The glittering salmon that smells of the sea:
I hold him up and whistle!
Now we go
Back to our earth: we will tear and eat
Sea-smelling salmon; you will tell the cubs
I am the Booty-bringer—I am the Lord
Of the River—the deep, dark, full and flowing River.

Stephens 1882–

The brilliant achievements of James Stephens in the novel have tended to overshadow his work as a poet, but he is a vivid and amusing poet, and it happens that his verses are marked by the same qualities for which his fiction is famous. "Insurrections" (1909), his first volume, with the others which followed it in fairly rapid succession, established him early in his career as an impish poet, humorous, grotesque, and occasionally profound, and by no means disposed to take too solemn a view of the materials which had already become conventional in Irish poetry. He wrote of cities and men rather than of hillsides and fairies, or if he wrote of fairies and heroes he treated them with a familiarity sometimes bordering on levity. At the same time that he is a humorist in verse, however, Stephens is a devotee of the rarer forms of beauty, and many passages in his poetry are lovely beyond the power of many more serious writers.

"What Tomas an Buile Said in a Pub" quotes a drunkard on the subject of God:

I saw God. Do you doubt it?
Do you dare to doubt it?
I saw the Almighty Man. His hand
Was resting on a mountain, and
He looked upon the World and all about it:
I saw him plainer than you see me now,
You must n't doubt it.

He was not satisfied;
His look was all dissatisfied.
His beard swung on a wind far out of sight
Behind the world's curve, and there was light
Most fearful from His forehead, and He sighed,
"That star went always wrong, and from the start
I was dissatisfied."

He lifted up His hand—
I say he heaved a dreadful hand
Over the spinning Earth, then I said, "Stay,
You must not strike it, God; I 'm in the way;
And I will never move from where I stand."
He said, "Dear child, I feared that you were dead,"
And stayed His hand.

In his later books Stephens has widened his range, reaching, for instance, to the heights of this beautiful and profound lament for Deirdre, his favorite among the mythical personages of ancient Ireland:

Do not let any woman read this verse;
It is for men, and after them their sons
And their sons' sons.

The time comes when our hearts sink utterly;
When we remember Deirdre and her tale,
And that her lips are dust.

Once she did tread the earth; men took her hand;
They looked into her eyes and said their say,
And she replied to them.

More than a thousand years it is since she
Was beautiful: she trod the living grass;
She saw the clouds.

A thousand years! The grass is still the same,
The clouds as lovely as they were that time
When Deirdre was alive.

But there has never been a woman born
Who was so beautiful, not one so beautiful
Of all the women born.

Let all men go apart and mourn together;
No man can ever love her; not a man
Can ever be her lover.

No man can bend before her; no man say—
What could one say to her? There are no words
That one could say to her!

Now she is but a story that is told
Beside the fire! No man can ever be
The friend of that poor queen.

Such a poem is effective in part because its author has not stood too much upon his dignity. He has not been conventionally and vaguely worshipful before his legendary queen, but has been simply, even painfully, impressed by her human beauty; he has been a man with all of man's complex and varying motives, and that is the secret of Stephens's success in anything that he has written.

Campbell 1881–

"The Mountainy Singer," "Irishry," and other volumes by Joseph Campbell have contributed to contemporary Irish poetry a remarkably large number of ingenuous and affecting songs. Campbell first announced himself through the following stanzas:

I am the mountainy singer—
The voice of the peasant's dream,
The cry of the wind on the wooded hill,
The leap of the fish in the stream.

Quiet and love I sing—
The cairn on the mountain crest,
The cailin in her lover's arms,
The child at its mother's breast.

Beauty and peace I sing—
The fire on the open hearth,
The cailleach spinning at her wheel,
The plough in the broken earth.

He went on to say that he would sing of travail and pain, of sorrow and death, of the only life in fact that peasants lead. For he is the singer *par excellence* of peasant life. He has gone much about the hills and lanes of certain counties, observing the inhabitants in their infinitely varied attitudes and callings; and he has copied them with always a becoming fidelity. He has paid particular attention to Christian ritual and folk-belief, treating this with as much affection as he has treated the more pagan aspects of the popular imagination. Perhaps the best known of his poems is "The Old Woman," in which he has preserved the image of tranquil old age not only for Ireland but for all places and times:

As a white candle
  In a holy place,
So is the beauty
  Of an aged face.

As the spent radiance
  Of the winter sun,
So is a woman
  With her travail done,

Her brood gone from her,
  And her thoughts as still
As the waters
  Under a ruined mill.

DRAMA

The development of a national Irish drama proceeded rapidly during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and it is this department of the new national literature which is best known abroad. One reason for the latter fact is that the Irish playwrights have numbered several particularly brilliant persons among themselves; another reason is that the circumstances attending a new departure in the drama draw wide-spread attention from critics and critical periodicals. Chief among such circumstances in the present case was the founding of special theaters in Dublin, as in other capitals during the same period, in order to meet the needs of a special and at first unpopular drama. Of the two important theaters founded in Ireland for such a purpose, the first was the Irish Literary Theater, which commenced its career in 1899 with a play by Yeats. Yeats had been the chief mover in the enterprise, but he had been materially assisted by Edward Martyn, George Moore, Æ, and others. Eventually he found the Literary Theater unsuited to his personal dramatic program, which provided for a predominance of folk and legendary plays, and withdrew into another movement. Edward Martyn, at first with the help of George Moore, but latterly alone, has directed the Literary Theater in accordance with his own program, which provides especially for intellectual plays in the general European tradition of Ibsen. He himself has written and produced in Dublin half a dozen plays in the manner of Ibsen, and in addition has presented a number of worthy plays from writers of the Continent. The most interesting career of the Irish drama, however, has been run in connection with the theater to which Yeats withdrew. With him as president, the Irish National Theater Society was formed,

and after two years a theater, now famous as the Abbey Theater, came into possession of the society. Since 1904 the Abbey Theater has been the home, properly speaking, of the Irish national drama; it is here that the most famous Irish plays have been first presented; it is here that the most significant reputations have been made.

Yeats

With the one exception of Synge, Yeats is the best-known Irish playwright. If he is greater as poet than as dramatist, if his gift is really for lyric and narrative utterance, he at least is one of the glories of the stage he has labored to found, and his influence has been incalculable. His plays are somewhat lacking in structure, and they occasionally fail in dramatic effect; they are often vague and inconclusive; but all of them are beautifully written, and the best of them have stirred their audiences to a profound and poetic response. "The Countess Cathleen" tells the story of a wealthy noblewoman of old times who when her people were suffering from famine sold her soul to the devil in order that they might not be forced from necessity to sell theirs. As a play it hardly succeeds, but as poetry it ranks high among Yeats's works. "The Land of Heart's Desire" (1894) is also more a poem than a play. It deals with the fairy material which Yeats likes so much to resurrect from the Celtic past; it returns to the pagan world. Mary Bruin, the young daughter of peasants "at a remote time," hears the call of the Sidhe, or fairies, outside her father's door. At last Mary allows herself to dance with a strange child who has entered the house, and at the close of the dance her spirit leaves her body to dwell in the world of spirits forever. "The Shadowy Waters" is said to be preferred by Yeats himself to all his other plays. But again it is preferable only on the ground of its poetry; no action, and therefore no drama, is possible in a piece which attempts to express the abstract

longings of a soul for absolute, imperishable love. The scene is a ship in the shadowy waters of the western sea, and the hero is Forgael, who at first rejects the mortal love of Queen Dectora, bestowed upon him as the ship adventures through quiet waves, but who accepts that love when its owner is made to understand the nature of his quest, and unites with him in spirit.

"On Baile's Strand" was the first of Yeats's plays in verse to achieve a distinct dramatic success. It retells the story which he told in his poem "The Death of Cuchulain," and tells it with all the power of which the author is capable. Excellent material for drama of course is furnished by the episode of the coming of Cuchulain's unknown son to fight him, and by the determination of Cuchulain to die in battle with the waves after he has killed the young warrior. Much in the way of reality is contributed by a fool and a blind man who talk in idiomatic prose in the intervals of heroic verse. Equally dramatic, "Deirdre" is Yeats's contribution to a great body of literature which in recent years has collected around this epic figure. The story of Deirdre lends itself to poetic, narrative, or dramatic treatment in almost every one of its episodes, but particularly in the episode of Deirdre's return to Ireland with Nasi and his two brothers. Yeats has handled this scene, ending with the murder of the three brothers and the suicide of the heroine, with rare dramatic tact and with profound human feeling.

The most popular play by Yeats is in prose. "Cathleen ni Houlihan" (1902) relates with simplicity and effectiveness the tragic story of the appearance to Michael Gillane in 1798 of a Poor Old Woman who urges him off to the wars. Despite his plans to marry, and despite his duties at home, Michael follows this personification of patriotism out of the village. Not until the end of the play does any one on the stage become aware that the

Poor Old Woman is the ancient queen of Ireland in disguise. Peter, Michael's father, asks Patrick, the younger son, if he had seen an old woman going down the path away from the house. "I did not," answers Patrick, "but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen." The accent of this last speech is what is fairly rare in Yeats's work, the peasant or folk accent. Much as he has labored for the peasant drama, he has never succeeded in saturating himself for long, as certain later playwrights have, in the homely speech of common people. The Old Woman's speech before she leaves is an approximation to it, and it is beautiful: "It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born, and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that, they will think they are well paid."

Yeats has written other plays in prose, none of which is of the first rank, though two of them have been popular. "The Hour-Glass" is a morality play, and "The Pot of Broth" (written in collaboration with Lady Gregory) is a farce. "Where There is Nothing," rewritten with Lady Gregory as "The Unicorn from the Stars," contains more social criticism than is usually to be found in Yeats's plays. Martin Hearn revolts against conventional industry, ethics, and religion in favor of an ideal world of which he has been dreaming, a world where "the battle goes on always, always." This world is to be apprehended only by one who has "put out the senses" as one puts out a candle; in short, Yeats has approached his

mystic's world once more, this time through the medium of prose, and in the language of social criticism.

Synge 1871–1909

The peasant accent spoken of above found its most perfect employer in John Millington Synge, who without any doubt is the greatest Irish playwright to date, and indeed by general consent is one of the most powerful dramatic writers who have used the English language. As a young man he had left his university and wandered to Paris, where Yeats on a visit found him miserably existing in a vain hope to master French literature and become a critic of it. Yeats, immediately perceiving in him great creative powers, and encouraged in this faith by the fact of Synge's linguistic training, persuaded him to return to Ireland and go for a while among the peasants of the west coast, where primitive conditions still obtained and the original speech of the country had not lost its flavor. Synge was willing to try the experiment, and took up a residence in the Aran Islands, off the west coast. His stay here, though it was not a continuous one nor very long, was richly productive in literary results. He adjusted himself easily to the life of the peasants and fishermen among whom he lived; learned to talk their language; heard many old stories, some of which he later worked into plays; observed man and beast and sky and sea always with a poet's eye; and in general prepared himself for a series of dramatic pieces which should be charged with this atmosphere and in which the people should talk a kind of English like no other English ever heard—at once more beautiful and more real, and real with the reality of purely Irish life. Synge left a record of this sojourn in a volume called "The Aran Islands" (1907), which many of his readers enjoy equally with the plays; another volume of observations repeated the process for

other parts of the Irish world—Wicklow, West Kerry, Galway, and Mayo.

The six plays of Synge are in the form of prose, but they are among the most highly poetical writings of modern times. The people in them are more than peasants; their eloquence, their singing passion as they speak of death or love or loneliness or pain, raises them to the rank of great tragic poets. There is no lack of comedy at the same time; but the comedy is that of irony, of sardonic commentary upon the elements of existence. The words have a deep, vibrant melody in them which strikes a similar melody, or seems to strike it, from the hills and glens which always rise in the background. The sense of place is very strong in the reader or spectator as the play proceeds; the atmosphere—often misty or murky—rolls close about him, and he all but participates himself in the tragedy or the comedy that is being lived. The stories tell themselves with apparently no effort; the characters are natural, even when they are possessed by extraordinary passions. Yet the art of these plays is an intricate art, and the significance of these actions tends always to be a universal significance.

Synge's first play contained in its one short act most of the qualities now associated with his name, and contained them in their full intensity. Synge seems never to have had to go through a period of dramatic preparation; he felt from the beginning exactly what effect he wished to achieve, and he achieved that effect by the best because the most natural means. "In the Shadow of the Glen" (1903) tells a story heard by Synge in the Aran Islands; but he has set the scene in "the last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow." A tramp appears one misty night at the cottage of Dan Burke, a farmer, and upon being welcomed with un-

expected fervor by Nora Burke, the young wife, discovers that the man of the house is lying dead under a sheet at the back of the room. At first it seems that Nora wishes to have him there for company only, but soon she puts on her shawl and leaves to find a young farmer who will be somewhere in the neighborhood, to tell him of her misfortune. While she is gone the dead man rises and tells the tramp that he has merely feigned death in order to test his wife's fidelity. He is an old man, and Nora, he suspects, has fallen in love with young Michael Dara. Before Nora returns with Michael, Dan resumes his former appearance, and when the two come in out of the darkness he hears his wife tell Michael that she had been a fool ever to marry an old man, even though he had given her a farm. At last Dan hears enough to satisfy him and confronts the two conspirators with his living presence. He orders Nora to leave forever, and when Michael hesitates to go with her, she angrily accepts the tramp as her companion.

"Riders to the Sea" (1904) is perhaps the best known of Synge's pieces for the stage, though it is not necessarily the greatest. Like his first play it is based upon his observations in the Aran Islands, not only of the fact that death comes often and suddenly to many island fishermen, but of the more particular fact that the body of a drowned islander was washed up during his residence there in much the same way that Michael's body is washed up here. The play is actually a lyric poem, a cry from the heart of a poor people against the cruelty and waywardness of death. Like all good poets Synge thought much about the ravages of old age and death; his characters feel those two evils more deeply than any other. Old Maurya here has lost five sons in the sea, and presently she loses her sixth and last. Her "keen-

ing," or sorrowing, provides a kind of continual chorus which is poetic in every word: "They 're all gone now, and there is n't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I 'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I 'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening."

"The Tinker's Wedding" was Synge's first comedy, and it was scarcely successful. The reckless fun of two tinkers who for some strange reason desire the respectability of marriage furnishes excellent material for farce, but Synge has not justified the length of his piece; the amusement of the spectator flags. It is interesting at the same time to note this evidence that Synge had an unusual endowment in comedy, and important to remember that his high spirits expressed themselves on many occasions in other than sorrowful accents.

"The Well of the Saints" (1907) was Synge's first full-length play, and it is one of his best. Two old blind beggars, Martin Doul and his ugly wife Mary, have illusions not only about the beauty of each other but about the beauty of the whole world. Happening to cross the path of a saint who possesses the power of healing the afflicted, they permit him to cure them of their blindness, only to commence a career of disillusionment that ends with the gradual loss of their sight again. At the conclusion of the play they indulge in rhapsodies upon the beautiful dark ideal world which has been restored to them, rhapsodies in which Synge has expressed all of his own powerful idealism and all of his own poet's delight in the sounds and sights of the world.

I 'll be getting my death now, I 'm thinking, sitting alone in the cold air, hearing the night coming, and the blackbirds flying round in the briars crying to themselves, the time you 'll hear one cart getting off a long way in the east, and another cart getting off a long way in the west, and a dog barking maybe, and a little wind turning the sticks. . . .

Ah, it 's ourselves had finer sights than the like of them, I 'm telling you, when we were sitting a while back hearing the birds and bees humming in every weed of the ditch, or when we 'd be smelling the sweet, beautiful smell does be rising in the warm nights, when you do hear the swift flying things racing in the air, till we 'd be looking up in our own minds into a grand sky, and seeing lakes, and big rivers, and fine hills for taking the plough. . . .

I 'm thinking it 's a good right ourselves have to be sitting blind, hearing a soft wind turning round the little leaves of the spring and feeling the sun, and we not tormenting our souls with the sight of the gray days, and the holy men, and the dirty feet is trampling the world.

"The Playboy of the Western World" (1907) made Synge quickly famous in Great Britain and America. The reason was not merely that the piece was so excellent as to inspire many to call it his masterpiece—fortunately this question can never be decided—but that the performance of it was attended by a scandal among those sections of the Irish who were jealous of their good name. These latter people, absurdly enough it now seems, were outraged by a story of an Irish boy who began to feel respect for his manhood only when he thought he had killed his father and who passed as a hero among strange people as long as they believed the tale of his deed to be true. Christy Mahon stumbles into a village on a wild coast of Mayo with the news that he has split his father's skull with a potato-digger. Pegeen Mike, the daughter of the local tavern-keeper, immediately falls in love with him and the townswomen throng about him—all to be disappointed, along with Christy himself, when

the father turns up with only a wound in his head. The morals of the piece, which incidentally are natural enough, are entirely irrelevant to a discussion of its artistic qualities. Those qualities are of the highest. The talk is as rich and racy and beautiful as any in Synge; and the story is marvelously told. In a preface to the printed version Synge has explained that the source of his linguistic inspiration lay in the genius of the Irish people. "For in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. . . . In a good play every speech should be as fully flavored as a nut or an apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry." No better analysis has been made of the combination in Synge of poetry with realism.

Synge's last play represented a new departure for him; he returned to the world of Irish legend. His "Deirdre" tells once more the deathless story, and tells it with greater power and beauty than are to be found in any other modern version. This is due partly to his skill and insight in the matter of human motives, and partly to the fact that he retained the peasant language which he had perfected into so fine and natural a dramatic instrument. His Deirdre is a living woman, possessed of great power in love and death; and in the course of the play she expresses for the last time in Synge the poet's profound dread of death and old age. She, equally with him, is thinking of the time when she and Nasi will be no longer young and beautiful; in the light of such a possible future, death now at the hands of Conchobar is in some measure a blessing. "Deirdre" was not performed until a year after Synge's death. Then it was a

forcible reminder how great a writer has been lost to Ireland and the world.

Colum

Equal to Synge in originality and artistic integrity, Padraic Colum has yet failed to make an equivalent impression outside of Ireland because of the peculiarly local materials with which he has dealt. He is a realist, a writer essentially of prose plays, and a penetrating analyst of Irish social conditions. With the scrupulous technic and care of an Ibsen he has bent himself to the task of interpreting the conflicts which exist in the minds of representative Irish peasants. He is a peasant playwright in even a stricter sense than Synge; in so strict a sense, indeed, that he has paid the penalty of lesser fame. But he is an admirable craftsman; his plays are real in a more fundamental sense than is implied by mere fidelity to conditions; they are genuinely if soberly moving. Particularly in their dialogue are his dramas excellent. His people, care-worn perhaps, or puzzled by problems which they scarcely have the information or the intellect to solve, move slowly across the simple stage, thinking as they speak, and speaking with an utter, appealing naturalness. To a greater extent than a reader realizes at the time, he hears their conversation and accepts it as he would accept the actual talk of neighbors.

"The Land" deals with the agrarian problem in Ireland, a problem which is more complicated than the corresponding problem in the United States because while here it is merely a question of how people shall be induced to stay on their farms, in Ireland the question is in addition how people shall be induced to resist the call of America. Matt Cosgar in "The Land" leaves for America just at the time when his father has succeeded in gaining possession of the farm on which the family has always lived. The inefficient elders remain while

the youth is drawn toward the industrial, indifferent New World. "Broken Soil," later entitled "The Fiddler's House," shows a peasant being wooed from his home and his work by the call of the road. An artist by temperament, Conn Hourican abandons duty for vagabondage and so joins the company of Synge's poetic tramps. Colum has created another such person in "Thomas Muskerry" (1910), probably his best play. Myles Gorman, a blind piper, symbolizes for Muskerry, the old master of a workhouse, the freedom which he has never known because of his long attention to duty and because of his long sacrifices for his family. His last days, as seen in the play, are relieved for a brief period by dreams of happy independence when he shall retire from office; but his tragedy is to be hedged about by his grasping relatives until he dies of neglect and depression. "Thomas Muskerry" is not only an exceedingly pathetic spectacle; it is a subtle study of a problem of great importance in Ireland, the problem of the family.

Lady Gregory 1881–

Lady Augusta Gregory has been one of the stanchest suporters of the new literature in Ireland since the beginning of the twentieth century. Her finest contribution to that literature belongs to the department of fiction, but she has also written plays. No Irish playwright has produced more; nor for that matter has any Irish playwright of to-day been more widely popular. This is true in spite of the fact that Lady Gregory is not possessed of the highest talents. She is first of all an entertainer, and her forte is first of all the farce. Her "Seven Short Plays" (1909) contains the most famous of her farces; later pieces have rather monotonously continued similar themes, though they have attained equal success in the Abbey Theater. "Spreading the News" is best known. The idea upon which it is based is slight but of genuine value for comedy. The

scene is the outskirts of a fair, and the story tells of the absurd lengths to which a rumor grew in the space of a few minutes out of a remark that Bartley Fallon had been seen running after Jack Smith with a hay-fork. As a matter of fact, Bartley was merely attempting to overtake Jack and give him the fork which he had forgotten to take with him from an apple-stall where he had stopped to talk; but legend had it that he looked like murder, and soon the belief is general that the murder has been committed. The ensuing complications are resolved only when the two men stroll amicably back to the original scene. In "The Rising Moon" a fugitive from political justice prevails upon the police who are detailed to catch him, and escapes into a boat while they sentimentalize about their country. "The Workhouse Ward," one of the funniest of Lady Gregory's farces, is nothing but a conversation between two old men on their workhouse beds; their habitual bickering promises for a moment to separate them, but it soon becomes clear that it is by such quarrels of the tongue that they live, and one of them who is offered release refuses to go because he cannot leave his neighbor—whom immediately he begins to berate again as the curtain goes down.

Lady Gregory has written in addition to her farces several folk-history plays, dealing with periods in the past of Ireland both before and after the dawn of recorded history. The best of them, "Grania," uses purely legendary material, and introduces a heroine who strangely enough has been neglected by most Irish poets and playwrights. Grania is not unlike Deirdre. Brought to the court of Finn, an old Irish king, to be Finn's bride, she elopes before the ceremony with young Diarmuid, whom formerly she had seen and loved, and lives with him abroad for seven years until Finn follows and kills him. Many circumstances render the story different

from that of Deirdre, but the appeal of it is powerful, and Lady Gregory has treated it with a dignity and beauty not often to be found in her pages. A writer of unusual talent, she almost nowhere deserves the title of genius, as Synge nearly always does.

Dunsany 1878–

Coming somewhat later to the Irish theater than any of the playwrights so far discussed, Lord Dunsany has made a swift and brilliant reputation for himself without ever treating conventional Irish themes. He writes of neither peasants nor heroes. His scenes are romantic, far-off scenes, laid in countries to which he has given strange names and which are inhabited by people of a sort never met with in other books. "The Glittering Gate" is a parable of agnosticism and faith. Two tramps, Jim and Bill, attempt to scale the wall of their Heaven after death, only to find that the great gate when it is swung open reveals vast empty space: "Stars. Blooming great stars." Lord Dunsany has always been especially interested in gods. "The Gods of the Mountain" is a terrifying story of seven beggars in an Eastern land who dress like the seven stone gods of the mountain and palm themselves off on the people until the real gods—of green stone—walk down and turn the beggars to the stone from which they are pretending to have changed themselves. This is effective on the stage, as is another play on a similar theme, "A Night at an Inn" (1917). Three Englishman have stolen the great ruby from the forehead of the stone god of the East, Klesh. Three priests of Klesh who follow to recover the ruby are murdered without much trouble by the thieves, but eventually Klesh comes himself with heavy stony steps, screws the ruby back into its socket, and calls the three miscreants out of the room to a mysterious and horrible death. "The Queen's Enemies" relates the awful vengeance visited by an Egyptian

queen upon the kings who are her enemies. She invites them to dinner in an underground chamber and at the proper moment gives the signal which lets in the Nile. It is perhaps clear from these summaries just where the strength of Lord Dunsany lies—in theatrical devices moving to terror and to ironic contemplation of human fate. Within this domain he is a startling and memorable dramatist; but it is a narrow domain, and scarcely the highest powers are demanded for success in it. The spectator becomes aware of devices rather than ideas, and is willing to credit the author with little more than ingenuity. The best Irish drama has never departed too far from purely Irish themes—peasants and folk-heroes.

FICTION

Neither the novel nor the short story in Ireland has pursued anything like the consistent course which poetry and the drama have pursued. Irish fiction as a whole cannot be summed up in a phrase; there are no lines of development, no common themes. Most of its more brilliant representatives have been as little concerned with nationality as Yeats and Æ have been, or even as Synge was. In their realism, or their satire, or their principles of art, they have contributed not so much to the Irish stream of literature as to the general European stream.

Lady Gregory

Lady Gregory early published two volumes of adaptations or translations from the old Irish romances which promised at the time to inaugurate a line of modern fiction dealing with folk-heroes. But "Cuchulain of Muirthemne" and "Gods and Fighting Men" (1904) had few or no followers. They have been of immense influence in the field of poetry and the drama; they have been the source-book for all who wished to resurrect the shining folk of the past; they are

still unique as fiction. They tell the whole story of Cuchulain, Conchobar, Queen Maeve, the battle of the bulls, Deirdre, Nasi, Finn, and Oisin with a vigor and a beauty not found in any similar work since Standish O'Grady's "History of Ireland." A typical tribute to her books is Yeats's in an appendix to the first collection of his plays: "If my present small Dublin audience for poetical drama grows and spreads beyond Dublin, I shall owe it to these two books, masterpieces of prose, which can but make the old stories as familiar to Irishmen everywhere as are the stories of Arthur and his knights to all readers of books. I cannot believe that it is from friendship that I weigh these books with Malory and feel no discontent at the tally, or that it is the wish to make the circumstantial origin of my own art familiar, that would make me give them before all other books to Irish boys and girls. I wrote for the most part before they were written, but all or all but all is there, Oisin wandering, Cuchulain killing his son and fighting the sea, Maeve and her children, Baile and Aillin, Angus and his fellow-immortals, all literally translated, though with much condensation and selection, from the old writings." One of the reasons for the charm of Lady Gregory's stories is that they are written in peasant speech, in the Kiltartan dialect which the author best knew; therefore they preserve a great deal of the original flavor of legends, and are a living force as literature to-day.

Moore 1852– Attention has been given in another chapter,[1] the chapter on English fiction, to the novels and stories of George Moore that deal with Ireland or were written there. Moore is for all practical purposes an English author, since most of his life has been spent in London, and most of his books have been issued among English audiences. But he had an Irish period, and at

[1] See pages, 165-169.

last three of his books can be said to belong to Irish literature. "The Untilled Field" is a collection of short stories upon Irish subjects; "The Lake" (1905) is a novel of Irish religious life; and "Hail and Farewell," his autobiographical record in three volumes of his stay in Ireland, is in a sense a piece of Irish fiction—fiction, indeed, of a high if curious order.

Joyce 1882–

One of the strangest geniuses in the history of literature is James Joyce, a novelist who began his career in Ireland but who has since taken up his residence in Paris and has succeeded in reaching an international audience which may in time divest him of his more purely national characteristics. His first prose book, "Dubliners," was a collection of short stories more or less in the conventional forms, describing and satirizing Irish types. His "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (1916) attracted wide attention as promising a new form for fiction. Its hero was Stephen Dedalus, and the author's method was to give all of Stephen's thoughts as they passed pell-mell through his mind rather than to make him talk in the orderly fashion which is customary in the novel. The attitude of the author toward the Dublin through which Dedalus moved was savagely satiric; he reveled in disclosures of physical, intellectual, and moral filth; he painted the Irish capital as a hopelessly rotten city, corrupting to all sensitive and ambitious minds. But this was only a beginning for Joyce. Later there appeared from a private press in Paris an enormously long novel called "Ulysses" (1922)—one of the longest in existence—setting forth the actions, moods, reveries, thoughts, and words of a Dublin Jew named Bloom over a period of twenty-four hours. The savage cynicism of the "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" was magnified a hundredfold in "Ulysses"; the spectacle was presented of an author

spreading his discontent and disillusionment over hundreds of pages of amazingly frank discourse. The book will never have a wide audience because of the difficulty experienced in reading it; much of it is obscure; many passages are subtle parodies on books which Joyce does not like; the style is exceedingly elliptical. The aim is to show the entire contents of a man's mind during one day —the whole stream of thought—without reservation or shame. Competent critics predict that "Ulysses" will be permanently a masterpiece; if so, it will have such a life as Rabelais has had, or certain less-known marvels of literature.

Dunsany Lord Dunsany began his career as an author with prose tales somewhat on the order of his plays. He has written several volumes of these, ingeniously treating psychological or philosophical themes in exotic settings and appealing as always to the instincts in the reader of wonder and terror. He has invented a special geography for his purpose, and a special mythology; the names of his people, his gods, and his places are sometimes haunting and sometimes merely grotesque, but they are always strange. It is a question whether these tales are of permanent value, and it is almost certain that they are inferior to the plays; but a few of them are extraordinarily memorable. In a volume called "Fifty-one Tales" (1915), for instance, there is the story of Charon conveying the last mortal across the waters of Hades; there is the story of "The Guest," wherein a young man dines with Death at a restaurant; there is "Taking Up Piccadilly," which shows two workmen destroying London because it has not satisfied the gods—revealing, as they pick a hole in the pavement, the Southern stars.

Stephens James Stephens is the most popular Irish novelist of the twentieth century. He is also the best of those younger novelists who are definitely

Irishmen. The same qualities which were discussed in connection with his poetry are to be found in his prose. It is exceedingly lively prose, sparkling with wit, colored with beauty borrowed from its creator's fanciful and often mystical nature, and running rapidly through many moods—sarcasm, tenderness, satire, worship, and lyrical exaltation. The nearest equivalent in English fiction is the prose of Barrie, but there is no possibility of confusing the two writers; Stephens is perhaps the safer from sentimentality and the stronger in his likes and dislikes. In "The Charwoman's Daughter," for instance, published in America as "Mary, Mary," the scene is laid in mean streets; but, miserable as are the circumstances of the characters, there is a charm about the faculty which they possess of flying to a world of fantasy. The border between the two worlds is constantly crossed, and the realism in both cases is remarkable; Stephens always has been equally at home in the actual world and in the world of imagination. He can laugh at both worlds, for he finds them both entertaining; also, he can write tenderly on both sides of the mysterious boundary.

"The Crock of Gold" (1912) has as brilliant a beginning as can be boasted by any British novel. There seems to be no disagreement about that, though there are numerous persons who deny to the later portions of the book the same high rank. The scene is set "in the center of the pine wood called Coilla Doraca," and two philosophers are introduced whose wives, the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin and the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, are the terror of their lives. Within a few pages the laughable habits of the philosophers and the not so laughable habits of the two wives are masterfully sketched. By the end of the second chapter one of the philosophers and his wife are dead; the field is then left clear for the Philosopher. His conversations with various neighbors who

come through the pine wood to ask his advice about important matters are delicious satires on pedantry; his adventures through the world in search of the Irish god of love and life, Angus Og, are alternately beautiful and ludicrous. Pan comes into the story for a while, straying from the distant world where he is no longer welcome; but the great god of gods is Angus Og, who for Stephens represents the finest human qualities—spontaneous love, positive delight in life, and constant search for beauty in the world. Armies of fairies troop across the pages also, mingled with peasants and policemen; and the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath somewhat modifies her asperity as the action gets under way. The idealism of Stephens is expressed through the beautiful daughter of Meehawl MacMurrachu, Caitilin ni Murrachu. As she grows up she becomes conscious of aspirations within her that cannot be satisfied by mortal companionship; wandering off at first with Pan, whom she finds playing his thin pipes in the long grass, she eventually leaves him for Angus Og, with whom she inhabits a wonderful cave. "The Crock of Gold" is a medley of marvelous elements, but all of them are the product of an integral and superior imagination.

Stephens has also published short stories. Because of its variety and sprightliness, its wit and its understanding, "Here Are Ladies" is the favorite with many of Stephens's readers. But "The Demi-Gods" (1914) is more important. In it Stephens returns to the borderland between this world and the other. Patsy McCann and his daughter Mary and their donkey, three beggars on the roads of Ireland, are visited one day by three celestial visitors who put away their wings and their gold to wander with their mortal friends. The conversations of the angels with Patsy and Mary, their attempts to understand the world into which they have dropped, and

their comments upon it are handled with the deftness, the tact, and the almost sublime humor which must now be familiar in their author.

Having published four volumes of fiction in four years, Stephens rested for six years, meanwhile studying Gaelic, making researches into the legendary past, and concerning himself with Irish politics. The first fruit of his studies in the ancient myths was "Irish Fairy Tales," one of the finest volumes of fairy stories in modern times. Stephens here lavishes his mingled humor and imagination on Finn, Oisin, Bran, and other famous persons who were treated by Lady Gregory in her translations. His stories are rapid and fascinating, and they always take a turn which is entirely consonant with his genius. They have proved deservedly popular. The second fruit of his antiquarian studies was "Deirdre" (1923), a retelling of the inexhaustible story with which nearly every first-rate Irish author has undertaken to test himself. Although Stephens sticks closely enough to the original incidents, he of course applies his own fancy, his own humor, and his own philosophy. Incidentally he has never told a more interesting story; and he has never written more passionately or more devotedly of beautiful and mystical things—Deirdre, Nasi, and the spirit of the wood in which they met. "In the Land of Youth" goes still further with the heroic legends of Ireland.

ESSAYISTS

Yeats

The miscellaneous prose of the Irish Renaissance has dealt chiefly with literary criticism or politics, or with the philosophy of the new and spiritualized Ireland. One of its ablest representatives is William Butler Yeats, who in the course of his busy life has written many influential essays announcing new authors

or suggesting dramatic and poetic programs. He began with stories or sketches based upon folk-lore, the two best volumes in this field being "The Celtic Twilight" (1893) and "The Secret Rose." They contain some of the most beautiful prose in Irish literature, and take a position near the front of Yeats's work. His essays on various literary, philosophical, and political subjects may most profitably be studied in two other volumes, "Ideas of Good and Evil" and "The Cutting of an Agate." In these books Yeats has given as complete an expression as possible of his rather difficult and impalpable thought; the style is limpid and pure, while the metaphysical basis of the new literature is searched with characteristic sobriety.

Æ Æ's noble spirit and his gentle style show best in three volumes of prose, two of which, "Imaginations and Reveries" (1915) and "The Candle of Vision," are collections of miscellaneous critical or philosophical essays, and the other of which, "Interpreters," is an attempt at a statement of the eternal issue in Irish politics. Among the first may be found sensitive descriptions of the poetry of Yeats, Seumas O'Sullivan, and James Stephens; there are also numerous musing disquisitions on his own mystical view of the universe—analyses of his dreams, and declarations as to the paramount importance of the imagination in human life. "Interpreters," though it is political in subject-matter, is entirely free from nationalism; rather it is a treatise on "the politics of eternity"—an inquiry into the questions which always and everywhere arise in connection with man's desire for freedom.

Eglinton The only professional essayist of the Renaissance is W. K. Magee, who writes under the pseudonym John Eglinton. His most significant volumes are "Pebbles from a Brook" and "Anglo-Irish Es-

says" (1918). Here he announces his emancipation from the more extravagant tenets of the Celtic School and sanely endeavors to lay out a possible program for Irish literature. He is skeptical of the value of modern books which derive their inspiration wholly from legendary resources; he refuses to predict success for a literature or an art which leans heavily upon past achievements. He scouts the movement to revive Gaelic as a literary language, and in general urges his contemporaries to swing themselves into the current of European literature. While John Eglinton is an interesting and engaging writer of prose, and while he is eminently intelligent in all his points of view, he is yet too eclectic ever to be really influential. Modern Irish literature, like all healthy literatures, has been always something more than perfectly balanced. When it has searched passionately for great subjects in the history of Ireland, or when it has glorified the peasant mind with perhaps too generous a gusto, it has but committed the faults which genius is always permitted to commit. At any rate it has made an admirable beginning for itself. The names of Yeats, Æ, Synge, Colum, and Stephens, to mention no others among the Irish, are of the first significance to any one who would set out to understand contemporary British literature.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

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American Literature

A useful bibliographical guide, containing lists of books by various modern authors and critical references concerning them, is "Contemporary American Literature: Bibliographies and Study Outlines," by John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922).

A critical discussion of some of the authors considered in this section may be found in "A History of American Literature since 1870," by Fred Lewis Pattee (New York: The Century Co., 1915), who lays, however, less emphasis upon the work of the twentieth century than is now necessary.

CHAPTER I: POETRY

ANTHOLOGIES:

There are numerous anthologies of contemporary American verse, but the two most convenient are "The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English," edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), and "Modern American Poetry," edited by Louis Untermeyer (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921). The first includes both American and British poems; the second is the more comprehensive as regards time, covering the period 1870–1920. In the lists of recommended poems below (*) will indicate that a poem may be found in "The New Poetry" and (**) that it may be found in "Modern American Poetry." Poems quoted in full in the text above are not listed below.

There are also two critical discussions in which the subject of this chapter may be studied in greater detail: "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry," by Amy Lowell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), and "American Poetry since 1900," by Louis Untermeyer (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923).

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY:

Complete Works (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 6 vols.).

Biography: "The Life of James Whitcomb Riley," by Marcus Dickey (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1919–1922, 2 vols.).

Recommended: "The Old Swimmin'-Hole."
** "When the Frost Is on the Punkin."
"Little Orphant Annie."
"The Old Man and Jim."

GEORGE SANTAYANA:

Poems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

Recommended: Sonnets IV, VII, XIII, XV, XXV, XXIX, XLIV, **XLIX.**

EMILY DICKINSON:

Complete Poems (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company).

Biography: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," by Martha Dickinson Bianchi (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924).

Recommended: "I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed."
** "I Like to See It Lap the Miles."
"I Dreaded That First Robin So."
"A Bird Came down the Walk."
"A Narrow Fellow in the Grass."
"The Mountain Sat upon the Plain."
** "Elysium Is as Far as to."
"If You Were Coming in the Fall."
** "I Never Saw a Moor."
"Because I Could Not Stop for Death."
"I Have Not Told My Garden Yet."

RICHARD HOVEY:

Poems and dramas published by Small, Maynard & Company (Boston) and Duffield and Company (New York). "Along the Trail" (New York: Duffield and Company).

Recommended: ** "At the Crossroads."
** "Unmanifest Destiny."
** "Love in the Winds."
** "A Stein Song."
"Spring" ("Along the Trail").

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY:

Poems and Plays (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 vols.).

Recommended: "Gloucester Moors."
"An Ode in Time of Hesitation."
"The Quarry."
"The Menagerie."

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "The Master." **
* "Richard Cory." **
* "Miniver Cheevy." **
* "Mr. Flood's Party."
** "The Gift of God."
"Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford."
"The Poor Relation."
"Uncle Ananias."

ROBERT FROST:

Selected Poems (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923).

Recommended: * "Mending Wall." **
* "After Apple-Picking." **
** "The Tuft of Flowers."
* "Mowing."
* "An Old Man's Winter Night."
** "The Death of the Hired Man."
** "The Runaway."
** "Birches."
** "Good-bye and Keep Cold."
"The Wood-Pile."
"The Road Not Taken."

VACHEL LINDSAY:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "General William Booth Enters into Heaven."
* "The Eagle That is Forgotten." **
* "The Congo." **

* "The Chinese Nightingale."
* "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." **
** "A Negro Sermon:—Simon Legree."

EDGAR LEE MASTERS:

Works published by The Macmillan Company (New York) and Boni and Liveright (New York). "Spoon River Anthology" (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "Fiddler Jones."
* "Archibald Higbie."
* "Father Malloy."
* "Lucinda Matlock." **
* "William H. Herndon."
* "Rutherford McDowell."
* "Aaron Hatfield."
"Cassius Hueffer."
"Blind Jack."
"Elliott Hawkins."
"Magrady Graham."
"Lydia Humphrey."

CARL SANDBURG:

Works published by Henry Holt and Company (New York) and Harcourt, Brace and Company (New York). "Smoke and Steel" (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company).

Recommended: * "Chicago."
* "The Harbor."
* "Lost."
* "The Poor."
* "Killers."
* "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard." **
* "Old Timers."
* "Prayers of Steel."
* "Cool Tombs." **
** "Fog."
"The Hangman at Home" ("Smoke and Steel").

AMY LOWELL:

Works published by Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston).

"Men, Women and Ghosts" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

Recommended: * "Patterns."
* "Venus Transiens."
* "A Lady." **
* "Chinoiseries."
* "Red Slippers."
* "Meeting-House Hill." **
* "Four Sides to a House."

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY:

Works published by Mitchell Kennerley (New York) and Harper & Brothers (New York). "A Few Figs from Thistles" (New York: Harper & Brothers). "The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems" (New York: Harper & Brothers).

Recommended: ** "Renascence."
* "Recuerdo."
* "Sonnets."
"Keen" ("The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems").
"The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver" ("The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems").
"Sonnets from an Ungrafted Tree" ("The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems").
"The Singing Woman from the Wood's Edge" ("A Few Figs from Thistles").
"She is Overheard Singing" ("A Few Figs from Thistles").
"Portrait by a Neighbor" ("A Few Figs from Thistles").

CHAPTER II: PROSE FICTION

The subject of this chapter may be studied in greater detail in "Contemporary American Novelists: 1900–1920," by Carl Van Doren (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922).

STEPHEN CRANE:

Collected Works (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 10 vols., in preparation).

Biography: "Stephen Crane," by Thomas Beer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923).

Recommended: "The Red Badge of Courage" (New York: D. Appleton and Company).

FRANK NORRIS:

Collected Works (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 7 vols.).

Recommended: "The Octopus."

JACK LONDON:

Collected Works (New York: The Macmillan Company, 21 vols.).

Biography: "The Book of Jack London," by Charmian London (New York: The Century Co., 1921, 2 vols.).

Recommended: "The Call of the Wild."

O. HENRY:

Collected Works (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 14 vols.).

Biography: "O. Henry Biography," by C. Alphonso Smith (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1916).

Recommended: "The Four Million."

HAMLIN GARLAND:

Collected Works (New York: Harper & Brothers, 12 vols.).

Recommended: "Main-Travelled Roads."

THEODORE DREISER:

Works published chiefly by Boni and Liveright (New York).

Recommended: "Sister Carrie" (New York: Boni and Liveright).

BOOTH TARKINGTON:

Works published chiefly by Doubleday, Page and Company (New York) and Harper & Brothers (New York).

Recommended: "Seventeen" (New York: Harper & Brothers.)

GEORGE ADE:

Works published chiefly by Duffield and Company (New York), Doubleday, Page and Company (New York), and Harper & Brothers (New York).

Recommended: "Ade's Fables" (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company).

EDITH WHARTON:
Works published chiefly by Charles Scribner's Sons (New York) and D. Appleton and Company (New York).
Criticism: "Edith Wharton," by Robert Morss Lovett (New York: Robert M. McBride and Company, 1925).
Recommended: "Ethan Frome" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

WILLA CATHER:
Works published by Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston) and Alfred A. Knopf (New York).
Recommended: "My Ántonia" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER:
Works published by Alfred A. Knopf (New York).
Recommended: "Linda Condon."

JAMES BRANCH CABELL:
Works published by Robert M. McBride and Company (New York).
Criticism: "James Branch Cabell," by Carl Van Doren (New York: Robert M. McBride and Company, 1925).
Recommended: "Domnei."

ROBERT HERRICK:
Works published by The Macmillan Company (New York) and Harcourt, Brace and Company (New York).
Recommended: "Memoirs of an American Citizen" (New York: The Macmillan Company).

UPTON SINCLAIR:
Works published by Upton Sinclair (Pasadena).
Recommended: "The Jungle."

SINCLAIR LEWIS:
Works published by Harcourt, Brace and Company (New York).
Recommended: "Main Street."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON:
Works published by B. W. Huebsch (New York).
Recommended: "A Story Teller's Story."

FLOYD DELL:
Works published by Alfred A. Knopf (New York).
Recommended: "Moon-Calf."

ZONA GALE:
Works published by The Macmillan Company (New York) and D. Appleton Company (New York).
Recommended: "Miss Lulu Bett" (New York: D. Appleton Company).

CHAPTER III: THE DRAMA

Useful information may be found in "Playwrights of the New American Theatre," by Thomas H. Dickinson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), and "Our American Theatre," by Oliver Sayler (New York: Brentano's, 1923).

Recommended plays appearing in "Chief Contemporary Dramatists," edited by Thomas H. Dickinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company) will be marked (*).

CLYDE FITCH:
Collected Plays, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 4 vols.).
Recommended: * "The Truth."

AUGUSTUS THOMAS:
Recommended: * "The Witching Hour."

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY:
Collected Poems and Plays (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 vols.).
Recommended: * "The Great Divide."

PERCY MACKAYE:
Works published by The Macmillan Company (New York).
Recommended: * "The Scarecrow."

SUSAN GLASPELL:
Plays (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company).
Recommended: "Trifles."
"Bernice."

EUGENE O'NEILL:

Collected Plays (New York: Boni and Liveright, 2 vols.),

Recommended: "Beyond the Horizon."
"The Emperor Jones."
"The Hairy Ape."

CHAPTER IV: ESSAYISTS

JOHN MUIR:

Collected Works (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 8 vols.).

Biography: "The Life and Letters of John Muir," by William Frederic Badé (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924, 2 vols.).

Recommended: "The Mountains of California."

EDGAR WATSON HOWE:

Works published by Alfred A. Knopf (New York) and Harper & Brothers (New York).

Recommended: "Ventures in Common Sense" (New York: Alfred A. Knopf).

HENRY ADAMS:

Works published by Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston) and The Macmillan Company (New York).

Recommended: "The Education of Henry Adams" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

GEORGE SANTAYANA:

Works published by Charles Scribner's Sons (New York).

Recommended: "Soliloquies in England."

RANDOLPH BOURNE:

Works published by Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston) and B. W. Huebsch (New York).

Recommended: "Youth and Life" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

HENRY LOUIS MENCKEN:

Works published by Alfred A. Knopf (New York).

Recommended: "Prejudices: Third Series."

English Literature

A useful bibliographical guide, containing lists of books by various modern authors and critical references concerning them, is "Contemporary British Literature: Bibliographies and Study Outlines," by John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921).

A critical discussion of most of the authors considered in the present volume may be found in "Modern English Writers: Being a Study of Imaginative Literature, 1890–1914," by Harold Williams (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919).

CHAPTER I: POETRY

ANTHOLOGIES:

There are numerous anthologies of contemporary British verse, but the two most convenient are "The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English," edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), and "Modern British Poetry," edited by Louis Untermeyer (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1920). The first includes both British and American poems; the second is the more comprehensive as regards time, covering the period 1880–1920. In the lists of recommended poems below (*) will indicate that a poem may be found in "The New Poetry" and (**) that it may be found in "Modern British Poetry."

Oscar Wilde:

Collected Works (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 5 vols.).

Biography: "Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions," by Frank Harris (New York: The Author, 1918, 2 vols.).

Recommended: ** "Requiescat."
** "Impression du Matin."
"The Ballad of Reading Gaol."
"Hélas."

ERNEST DOWSON:

Poems and Prose (New York: Boni and Liveright).

Recommended: ** "You Would have Understood Me."
** "To One in Bedlam."
"Cynara."

STEPHEN PHILLIPS:

Poems (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company)

Recommended: ** "Beautiful Lie the Dead."
** "A Dream."
"Marpessa."
"Christ in Hades."

FRANCIS THOMPSON:

Collected Poems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2 vols.).

Recommended: ** "Daisy."
** "To Olivia."
** "An Arab Love-Song."
"The Hound of Heaven."
"The Poppy."

ALICE MEYNELL:

Collected Poems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

Recommended: ** "A Thrush before Dawn."
"Renouncement."
"The Shepherdess."
"The Poet and His Book."
"A Poet of One Mood."

RUDYARD KIPLING:

Collected Poems (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company).

Criticism: "Rudyard Kipling," by John Palmer (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915).

Recommended: ** "Gunga Din."
** "The Return."
** "The Conundrum of the Workshops."
** "An Astrologer's Song."
"The Ballad of East and West."

"Boots."
"Danny Deever."
"The Ladies."
"Mandalay."
"Mother o' Mine."
"The Overland Mail."
"Recessional."
"The Vampire."
"The White Man's Burden."

A. E. Housman:

"A Shropshire Lad"; "Last Poems" (New York: Henry Holt and Company).

Recommended: ** "Reveillé."
** "When I Was One-and-Twenty."
** "With Rue My Heart Is Laden."
** "To an Athlete Dying Young."
** "Loveliest of Trees."
"Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree."
"If It Chance Your Eye Offend You."
"Think No More, Lad."
"I 'listed at Home for a Lancer."
"Could Man Be Drunk Forever."

Thomas Hardy:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Criticism: "The Art of Thomas Hardy," by Lionel Johnson (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1923); "Thomas Hardy, A Critical Study," by Lascelles Abercrombie (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912); "Thomas Hardy, Poet and Novelist," by Samuel C. Chew (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1923).

Recommended: * "She Hears the Storm."
* "The Voice."
* "In the Moonlight."
* "The Man He Killed." **
* "The Two Houses."
* "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations.'" **
** "Going and Staying."

"Let Me Enjoy."
"On an Invitation to the United States."
"Drummer Hodge."
"God-Forgotten."
"The Roman Road."
"The Pine Planters."
"The Face at the Casement."
"Old Furniture."
"The Fallow Deer at the Lonely House."
"An Ancient to Ancients."

ROBERT BRIDGES:

Collected Poems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1912).

Recommended: ** "Winter Nightfall."
** "Nightingales."
"London Snow."

ALFRED NOYES:

Collected Poems (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 3 vols.).

Recommended: ** "Sherwood."
** "The Barrel-Organ.
"The Highwayman."

JOHN MASEFIELD:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "Ships."
* "Cargoes."
* "Watching by a Sick Bed."
* "What Am I, Life?"
* "The Passing Strange."
* "The Frontier."
** "A Consecration."
** "Sea Fever."
** "The Choice."
"The West Wind."
"Spanish Waters."
"Biography."
"The Everlasting Mercy."
"Reynard the Fox."

W. H. Davies:

"Collected Poems: First Series" (New York: Alfred A. Knopf); "Second Series" (New York: Harper & Brothers).

Recommended: ** "Days Too Short."
** "The Moon."
** "The Villain."
** "The Example."
"Sweet Stay-at-Home."
"Truly Great."
"Child Lovers."
"Strong Moments."
"A Child's Pet."
"The Song of Life."

Walter De La Mare:

Collected Poems (New York: Henry Holt and Company).

Recommended: * "The Listeners." **
* "An Epitaph." **
* "When the Rose Is Faded."
* "The Little Salamander."
* "The Linnet."
* "All That's Past."
** "Tired Tim."
** "Old Susan."
** "Nod."

Rupert Brooke:

Collected Poems (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company).

Recommended: * "Retrospect."
* "Nineteen-Fourteen." **
"The Fish."
"The Great Lover."
"Grantchester."

Aldous Huxley:

"Leda" (New York: George H. Doran Company).

Recommended: "Verrey's."
"Frascati's."
"First Philosopher's Song."

CHAPTER II: PROSE FICTION

GEORGE MOORE:

Collected Works (New York: Boni and Liveright, 21 vols.).

Criticism: "A Portrait of George Moore in a Study of His Works," by John Freeman (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922).

Recommended: "Esther Waters" (New York: Brentano's).

SIR JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE:

Collected Works (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 16 vols.).

Recommended: "Sentimental Tommy."

RUDYARD KIPLING:

Collected Works (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 28 vols.).

Criticism: See Suggestions for Study under Chapter I.

Recommended: "The Man Who Would Be King."
"The Phantom 'Rickshaw."
"The Man Who Was."
"Without Benefit of Clergy."
"Rikki-Tikki-Tavi."
"The Brushwood Boy."
"'They.'"

All these short stories may be found in "Selected Stories from Rudyard Kipling" (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company).

JOSEPH CONRAD:

Collected Works (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 20 vols.).

Criticism: Joseph Conrad," by Hugh Walpole (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916).

Recommended: "Youth"; "Heart of Darkness"; "The End of the Tether" (1 vol.).

H. G. WELLS:

Collected Works (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 28 vols.).

Criticism: "The World of H. G. Wells," by Van Wyck Brooks (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1915).

Recommended: "Tales of Space and Time" (New York: The Macmillan Company).
"Tono-Bungay" (New York: Duffield and Company).

ARNOLD BENNETT:
Works published by George H. Doran and Company (New York).
Criticism: "Arnold Bennett," by F. J. V. Darton (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915).
Recommended: "The Old Wives' Tale."

JOHN GALSWORTHY:
Collected Works (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 21 vols.).
Criticism: "John Galsworthy," by Sheila Kaye-Smith (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1916).
Recommended: "The Forsyte Saga."

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM:
Works published by George H. Doran Company (New York).
Recommended: "Of Human Bondage."

D. H. LAWRENCE:
Works published by Thomas Seltzer (New York).
Recommended: "Sons and Lovers."

ALDOUS HUXLEY:
Works published by George H. Doran Company (New York).
Recommended: "Antic Hay."

CHAPTER III: THE DRAMA

A convenient collection of modern British plays will be found in "Chief Contemporary Dramatists," edited by Thomas H. Dickinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915). Plays recommended below will be marked (*) if they are to be found in this collection.

SIR ARTHUR WING PINERO:
"The Social Plays of Arthur Wing Pinero" (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 4 vols.).
Recommended: * "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray."

HENRY ARTHUR JONES:
Collected Plays (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 4 vols.).
Recommended: * "Michael and His Lost Angel."

OSCAR WILDE:
See Suggestions for Study under Chapter I.
Recommended: * "Lady Windermere's Fan."
"The Importance of Being Earnest" (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation).

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW:
Works published by Brentano's (New York).
Biography and Criticism: "George Bernard Shaw," by Archibald Henderson (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1916); "George Bernard Shaw," by G. K. Chesterton (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1909).
Recommended: "The Devil's Disciple."
"Man and Superman."
"Saint Joan"

JOHN GALSWORTHY:
See Suggestions for Study under Chapter II.
Recommended: * "Strife."
"Justice."

SIR JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE:
See Suggestions for Study under Chapter II.
Recommended: "Dear Brutus."

THOMAS HARDY:
See Suggestions for Study under Chapter I.
Recommended: "The Dynasts" (New York: The Macmillan Company).

CHAPTER IV: ESSAYISTS

MAX BEERBOHM:
Collected Works (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 12 vols.).
Recommended: "Seven Men" (New York: Alfred A. Knopf.)

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW:

See Suggestions for Study under Chapter III.

Recommended: The prefaces to the plays read for Chapter III.

"Selected Passages from the Works of Bernard Shaw," chosen by Charlotte F. Shaw (London: A. C. Fifield, 1915).

H. G. WELLS:

See Suggestions for Study under Chapter II.

Recommended: "A Modern Utopia."

G. K. CHESTERTON:

Works published by Dodd, Mead and Company (New York).

Criticism: "G. K. Chesterton," by Julius West (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1916).

Recommended: "George Bernard Shaw."
"Varied Types."

W. H. HUDSON:

Collected Works (New York: E. P. Dutton Company, 24 vols.).

Biography: "W. H. Hudson," by Morley Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company).

Recommended: "Far Away and Long Ago."
"A Shepherd's Life."

LYTTON STRACHEY:

Works published by G. P. Putnam's Sons (New York).

Recommended: "Eminent Victorians."

Irish Literature

An historical and critical account of modern Irish literature will be found in "Ireland's Literary Renaissance," by Ernest Boyd (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922).

In addition to the two anthologies referred to in the Suggestions for Study in connection with American and English Literature, reference will be made below to the "Anthology of Irish Verse," edited by Padraic Colum (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922). Poems appearing in "The New Poetry" will be marked (*); poems appearing in "Modern British Poetry" will be marked (**); poems appearing in the "Anthology of Irish Verse" will be marked (***).

Standish O'Grady:

Recommended: "Selected Essays and Passages from Standish O'Grady," edited by Ernest Boyd (London: Fisher Unwin, 1918).

POETRY

William Butler Yeats:

Collected Works (New York: The Macmillan Company, 6 vols.).

Criticism: "William Butler Yeats," by Forrest Reid (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1915).

Recommended:
** "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."
** "The Song of the Old Mother."
** "The Cap and Bells."
** "An Old Song Resung."
* "The Cold Heaven."
* "That the Night Come."
* "No Second Troy."
* "The Collarbone of a Hare."
* "The Dawn."
* "The Magi."
* "The Fisherman."

* "The Wild Swans at Coole."
*** "Pity of Love."
*** "The Folly of Being Comforted."
"To an Isle in the Water."
"The Hosting of the Sidhe."
"The Death of Cuchulain."

Æ:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).
Criticism: "Æ," by Darrell Figgis (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1916).

Recommended: ** "The Great Breath."
** "The Unknown God."
*** "Immortality."
*** "A Farewell."

Seumas O'Sullivan:

Recommended: * "My Sorrow."
* "Splendid and Terrible."
* "The Others." ***
** "Praise."
*** "The Starling Lake."
*** "The Sedges."
*** "The Half Door."

Padraic Colum:

"Wild Earth and Other Poems" (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "Polonius and the Ballad Singers."
* "The Sea Bird to the Wave."
* "Old Men Complaining."
* "A Drover." ***
* "An Old Woman of the Roads." **
* "The Wild Ass."
** "The Plougher."
*** "River-Mates."

James Stephens:

Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Recommended: * "What Tomas an Buile Said in a Pub." **
* "Bessie Bobtail."
* "Hate."

* "The Waste Places."
* "Hawks."
* "Dark Wings."
** "The Shell."
*** "The Daisies."
*** "The Goat Path."

JOSEPH CAMPBELL:
Recommended: * "At Harvest."
* "On Waking." ***
* "The Old Woman." **
** "I Am the Mountainy Singer."
*** "The Blind Man at the Fair."

DRAMA

Recommended plays appearing in "Chief Contemporary Dramatists," edited by Thomas H. Dickinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company) will be marked (*).

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS:
See Suggestions for Study under Poetry, above.
Recommended: "The Land of Heart's Desire."
"Cathleen Ni Houlihan."
* "The Hour-Glass."

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE:
Collected Works (Boston: John W. Luce, 4 vols.).
Recommended: * "Riders to the Sea."
"The Playboy of the Western World."

PADRAIC COLUM:
"Three Plays" (New York: The Macmillan Company).
Recommended: "Thomas Muskerry."

LADY GREGORY:
"Seven Short Plays" (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons).
Recommended: * "The Rising of the Moon."

LORD DUNSANY:
"Plays of Gods and Men" (Boston: John W. Luce).

Criticism: "Dunsany the Dramatist," by Edward Hale Bierstadt (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1919).

Recommended: "The Queen's Enemies."

FICTION

LADY GREGORY:

Recommended: "Gods and Fighting Men" (London: John Murray).

JAMES JOYCE:

Criticism: "James Joyce," by Herbert S. Gorman (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1924).

Recommended: "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (New York: B. W. Huebsch).

LORD DUNSANY:

Recommended: "Fifty-One Tales" (Boston: Little, Brown and Company).

JAMES STEPHENS:

Works published by The Macmillan Company (New York).

Recommended: "The Crock of Gold."

ESSAYISTS

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS:

Recommended: "Ideas of Good and Evil" (New York: The Macmillan Company).

Æ:

Recommended: "Imaginations and Reveries" (Dublin: Maunsel).

JOHN EGLINTON:

Recommended: "Anglo-Irish Essays" (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company).

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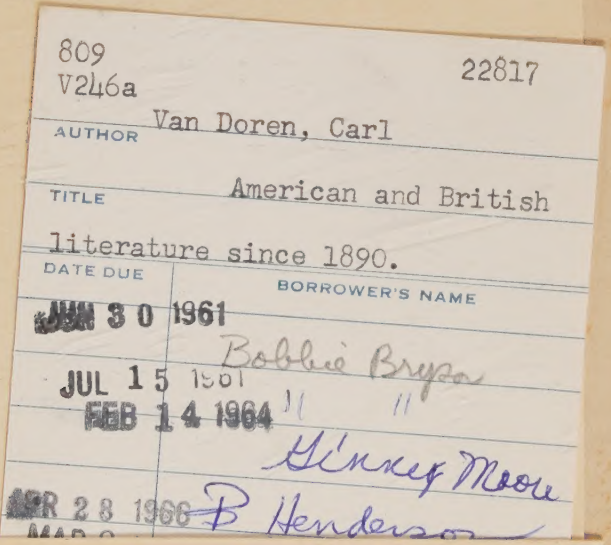
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